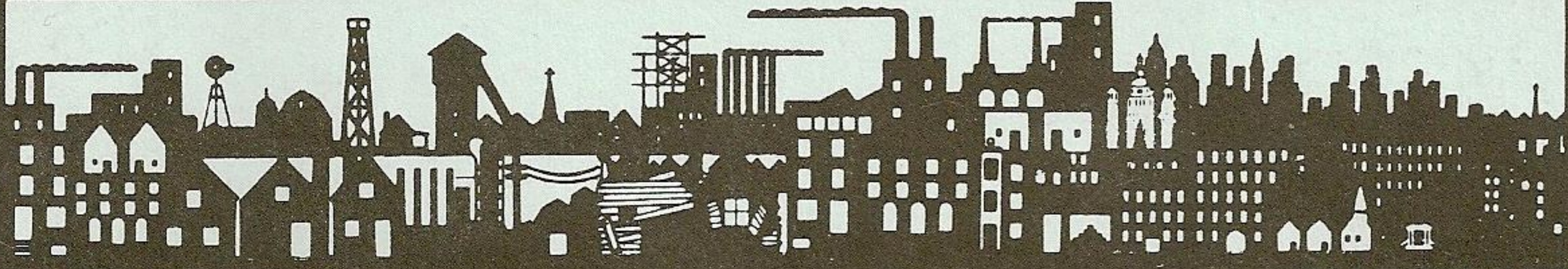
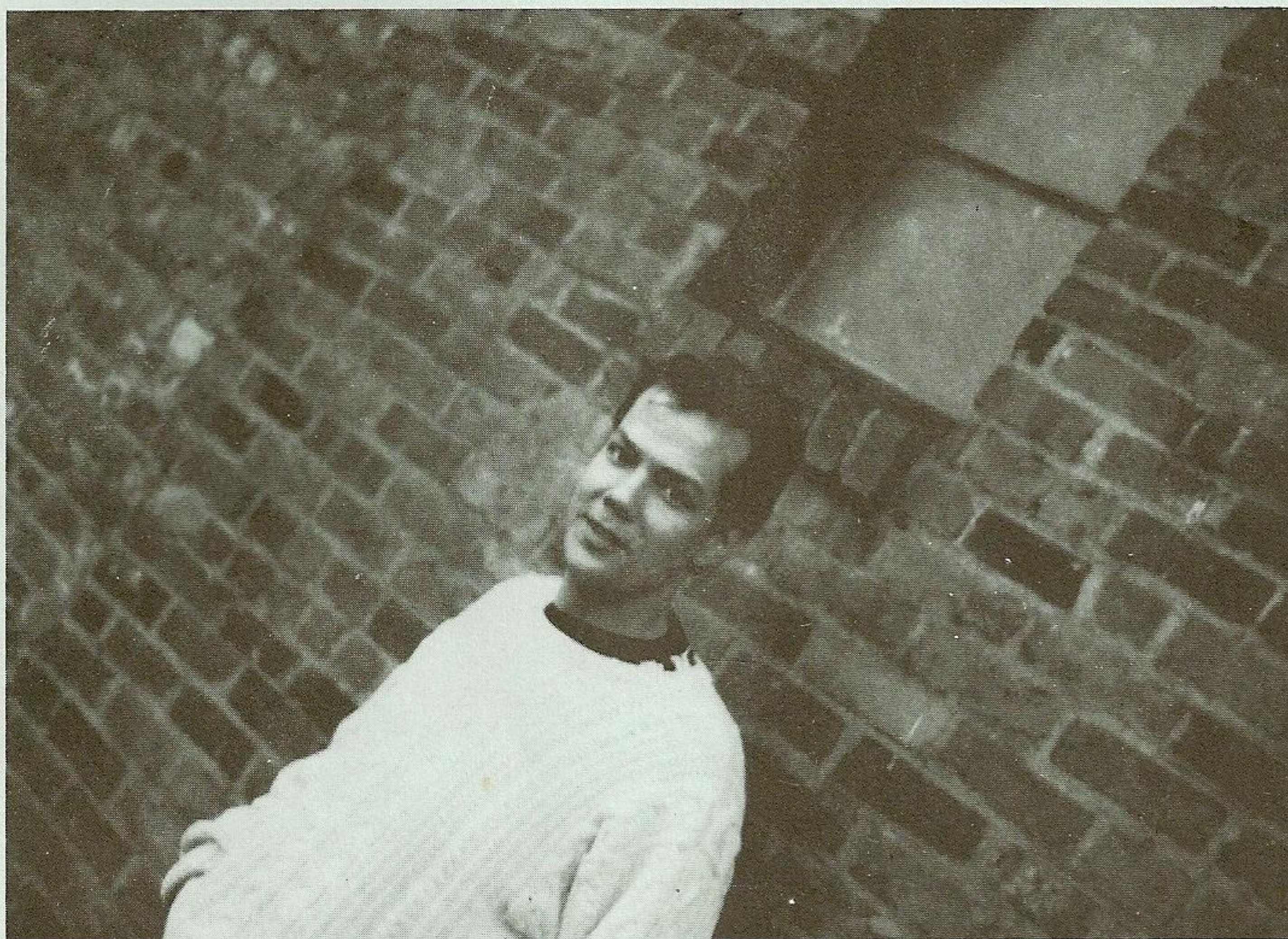


ELECTRONIC COTTAGE
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE



ISSUE THREE

MARCH 1990



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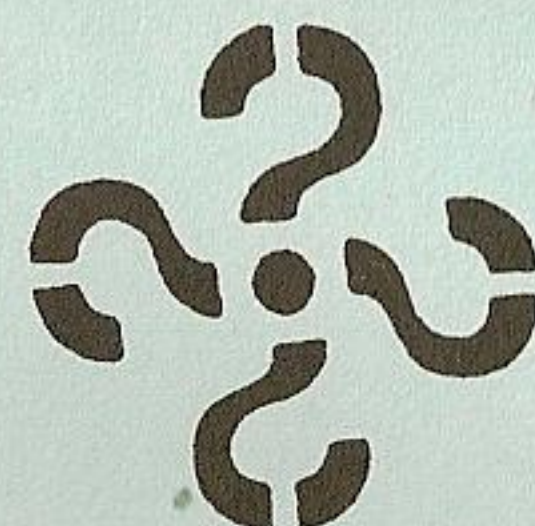
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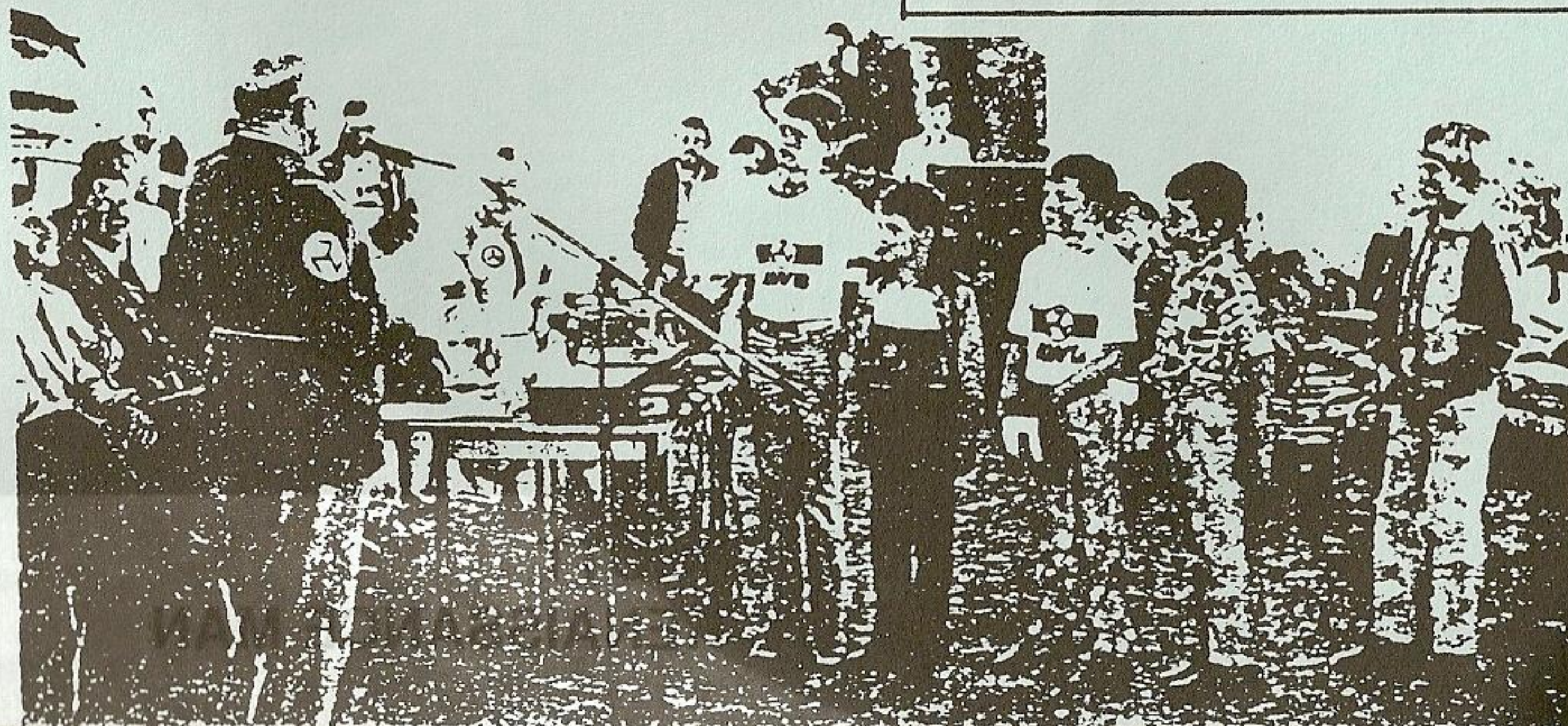
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ELECTRONIC COTTAGE

ISSUE TWO MARCH 1990

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Electronic Cottage cover logo by Sue Ann Harkey. Special thanks to Al Margolis, Dave Prescott and Chris Phinney for advice and direction; to my dad, Harold McGee for help with the Macintosh; and to Hallie Sawyer for friendship and encouragement. Printing by Action Printing of Tampa, Florida.

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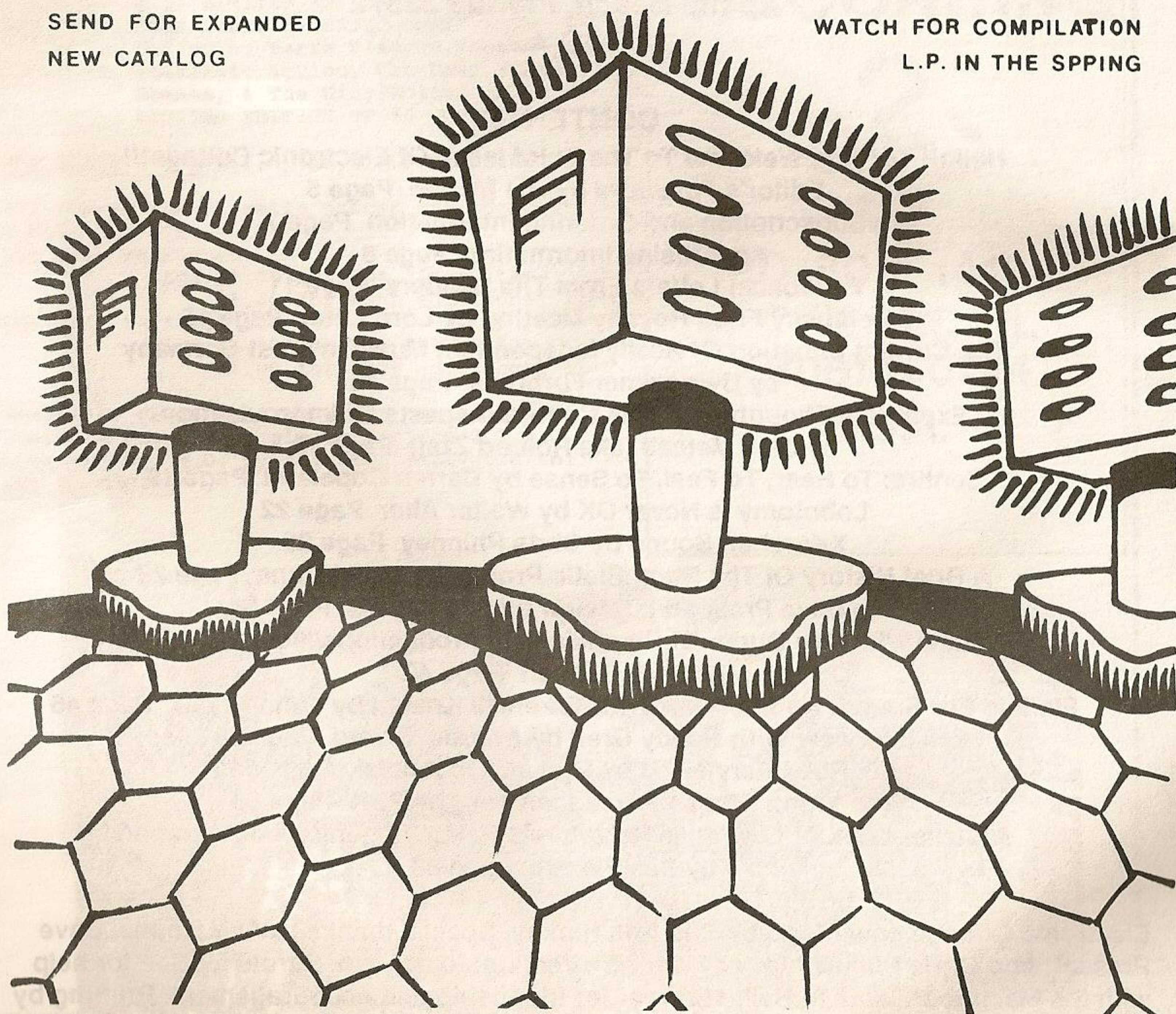
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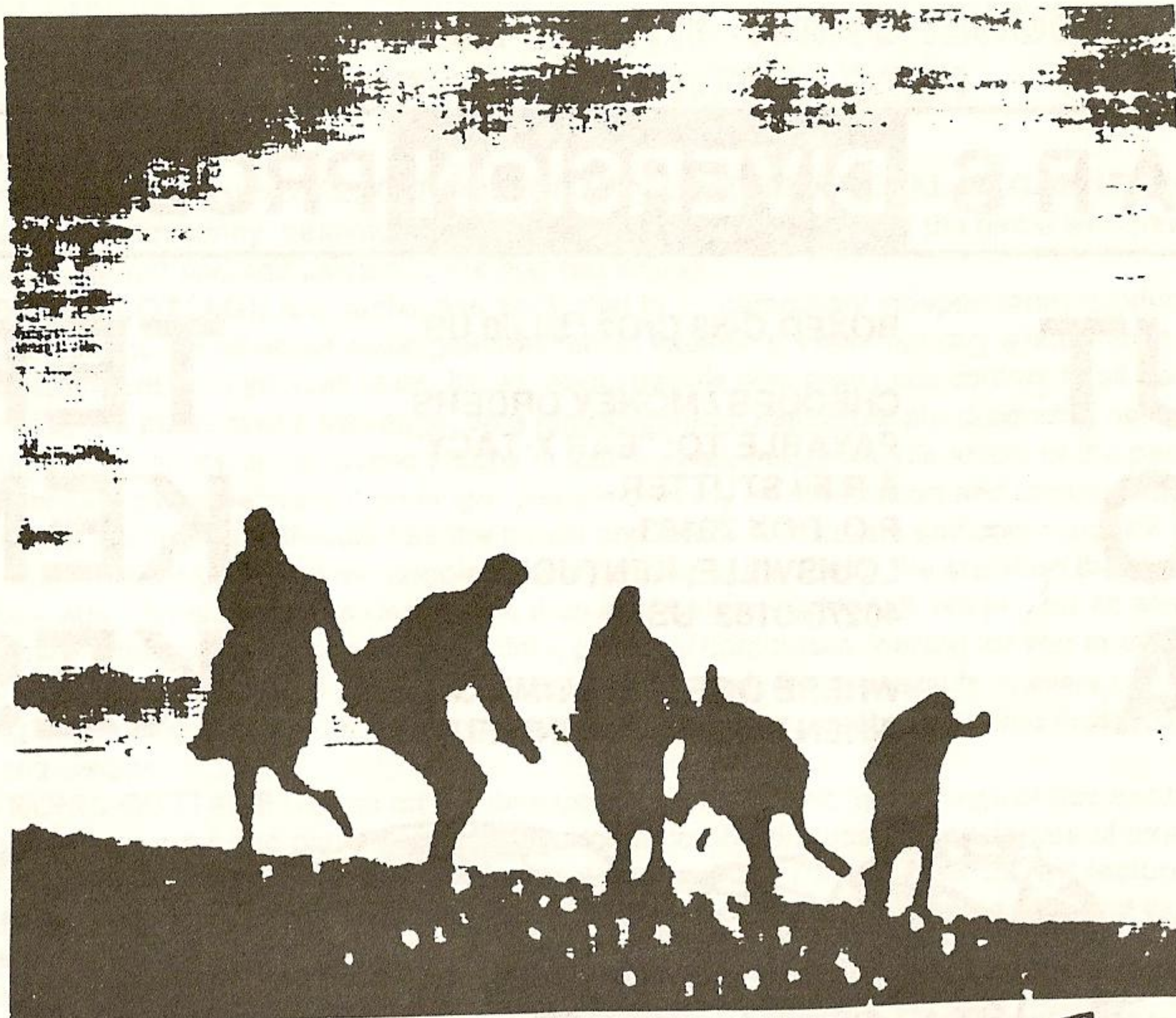
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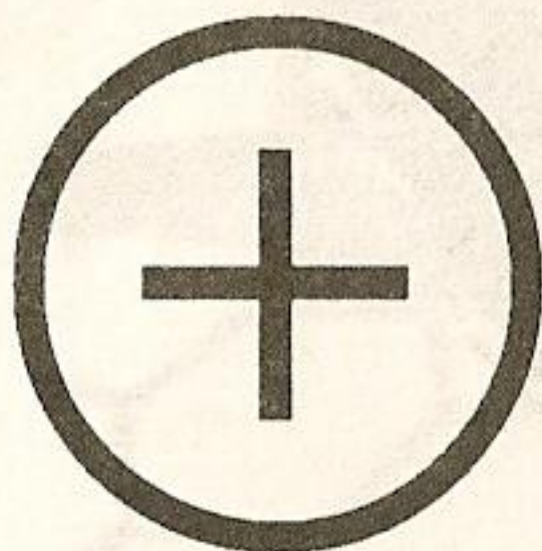
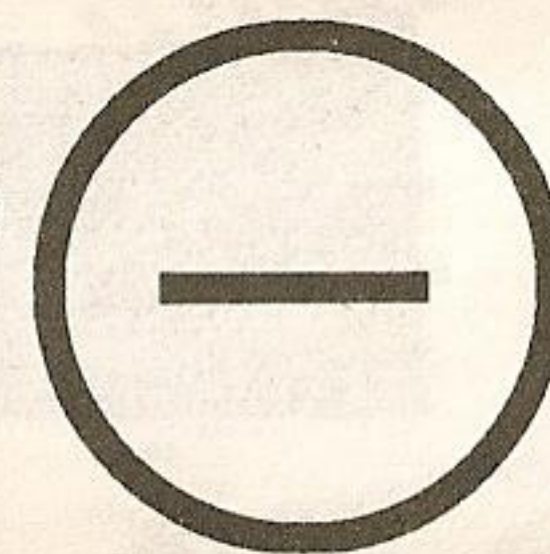
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HELLO HELLO!! YO! AND WELCOME TO THE THIRD ISSUE OF ELECTRONIC COTTAGE!!!

Welcome to the third issue of **ELECTRONIC COTTAGE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE**. Many thanks and hearty greetings from sunny, beautiful Florida to all my friends from around the globe who have responded with so much interest and enthusiasm to the first two issues.

ELECTRONIC COTTAGE is a publication dedicated to contemporary independently-produced electronic folk arts and culture. It's all about audio pioneers, sonic explorers, contemporary electronic music trailblazers and the independent do-it-yourself spirit. It's all about people who aren't just content to sit back and consume what the mass media serves up on a remote control platter, but are producing new, exciting, challenging and highly personal artistic visions in their homes, much like folk artists of the past. The mass media is running scared because it no longer has a monopoly on information and communication systems. More than ever before the individual has the power and freedom to create and communicate in his/her own way and share that vision with other people in every corner of the Earth. We stand on the threshold of an exciting new age. Art is now more democratic than ever before - Art for all, not just for an elite few! The tools are there - photocopiers, cassette recorders, personal computers- waiting for you to utilize them. While the millions of couch potatoes of the world rot, thousands of adventurous spirits in every corner of the globe are forging an exciting new scene, reaching out to others, sharing, synthesizing and cross-pollinating ideas, cultures and visions.

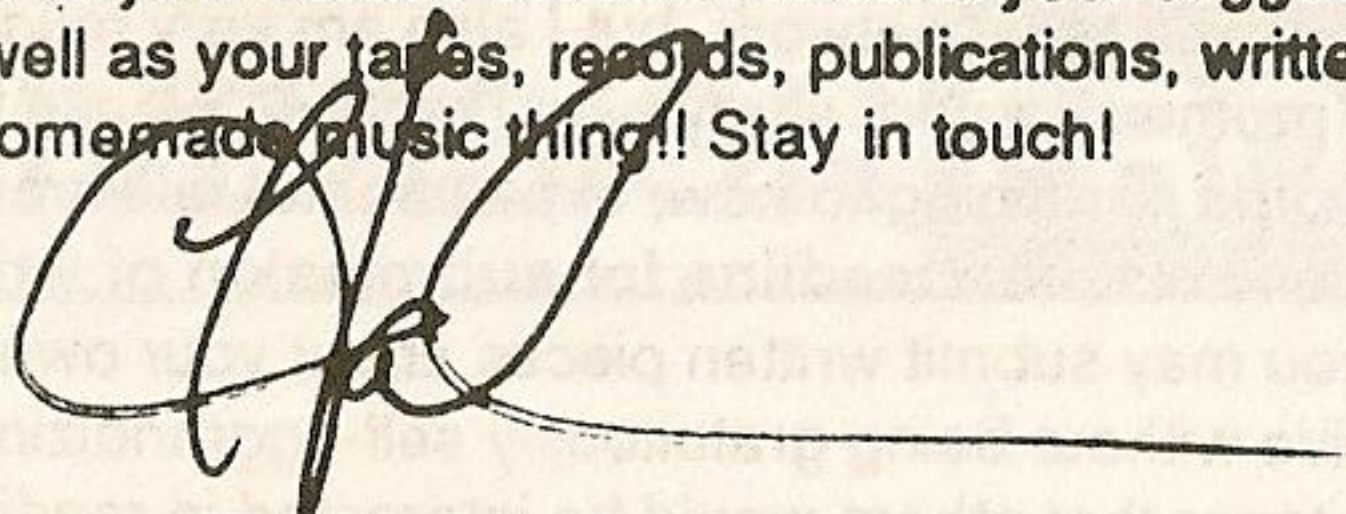
ELECTRONIC COTTAGE reports on the developments, news and happenings of this exciting, explosive scene and helps to put it into perspective. **EC** is a forum for the discussion and debate of timely and current issues of importance and relevance to independent/underground culture. Also, **EC** will feature thoughtful, meaningful portraits and profiles of noteworthy practitioners of electronic, avant garde and experimental music and art. **EC** sports the unique distinction of featuring writing by the people inside the scene, those who are making it happen -the electrotech artists, wizards and pioneers themselves!

Response to the first two issues of **EC** has been very encouraging! I really appreciate all the postcards, letters, cassettes, records, CDs, videos, magazines, books, mail art and other items that all of you have sent my way. It is apparent that **EC** has created quite a stir out there, and a lot of people have taken an interest in what's going on with this publication. I want to apologize to all of you who have tried to telephone me in the last few months and were unable to get through to me. This is my screw-up here - I printed my own telephone number incorrectly! Also, I do not have a telephone at the current time, so please be sure to write me if you have any questions or comments. I had hoped to get this issue out in December or January, but a number of difficulties of a personal and administrative nature caused **EC #3** to be delayed. I am determined to get **EC #4** out by the beginning of August at the latest, and **EC #5** hopefully by November. Admittedly, I am still rather new at this publishing bit, but it is getting easier and easier with each issue. And hopefully each issue of the magazine will get a little better and grow with the scene it covers. Also, I want to encourage all of you to contribute written work to **EC**. Remember, your input is what **EC** is all about. It is your forum - make the most of it! I do have a core or "staff" of writers, some of the most experienced, best-known and hardest-working members of the home taper network, but I also am very much interested in printing your written pieces. Although I can't promise I'll print everything I receive, please feel free to submit any article or editorial of up to 1500 words pertaining to new, experimental, electronic, difficult, independent and underground art, music and culture. **Deadline for submission of written material for Issue Four is May 15, 1990.** Remember, you may submit written pieces about your own work and activities as long as it is informative and instructive without being gratuitously self-aggrandizing. I'm sure a lot of you have had experiences as a home taper that others would be interested in reading about. Hopefully, the first two issues have given you a pretty good flavor of what **EC** is all about - so far. What it is to become is up to you!

On a few personal notes... **Chris Phinney** of **Harsh Reality Music** (our cover guy for **EC #2**) visited me in October 1989, along with his wife **Tawnya** and daughter **Molly Ann**. We all had a fabulous time going to the beach and hanging out in the beautiful Florida sunshine. Also, Chris and I got in a lot of good recording in my studio. Those sessions turned into a tape, **Phinney/McGee: Usufruct**, which Chris recently released on his Harsh Reality label. This was the first recording I had done since I left Indianapolis back in June '88 - and it felt great! Chris and the gang will be back for a visit near the end of March. If any of you out there plan to visit the Tampa, Florida area in the future please be sure to let me know and we'll make arrangements to meet! In August of this year I'll be taking a two week vacation and will travel up the East Coast to the New York City area, Boston, Buffalo, and possibly Toronto. I hope to get to meet a lot of you then. Contact me and we'll make arrangements to get together. I'm considering the idea of turning it into a sort of working vacation and might be conducting video interviews with home tapers and artists I meet along the way. There is a possibility I'll compile these interviews into an **ELECTRONIC COTTAGE** video documentary for possible release later in 1990. I'll keep you informed.

By whatever name you want to call it, and in any sense you want to consider it (as a "phenomenon", "revolution", "movement", or "network"), the home taper scene is a dynamic organism subject to all the conditions of existence of any other organism. Every organism's main *raison d'être* is the survival of the organism. Survival means adapting to changing circumstances. Adaptation means change, and where there is change there will always be conflict. Conflict in and of itself is not bad, but it does mean problems, and it is often painful. Conflict is of course the struggle between the old and the new, and every organism has a certain built-in laziness which causes it to sentimentally cling to old outmoded forms of operation and behavior. If we follow this line of thinking a bit further we could consider the home taper scene in a loose sense as an organism made up of thousands of individuals working in varying degrees of association, interaction and inter-involvement. In the strictest sense the home taper scene cannot be considered a movement or network. There are no laws, rules, regulations or dogma *per se*, and indeed the scene has as many attitudes, ideas and styles as there are home tapers and artists! But we do all at least indirectly affect everyone else involved in these endeavors. It would be naive to assume that we are all one big happy family, and even we were, does anyone know of a family whose members don't have differences? And yes, there will always be conflict within the home taper scene, and quarrels and disagreements, but hopefully that conflict will lead to change and growth. We all just have to keep our minds open and listen, or what we're doing won't mean a thing and will end up being as hopelessly irrelevant as pop culture itself. And while it is important as artists to comment on and reflect the pain, injustice, trouble and turmoil of the world, it is equally important that we do not fall into the trap of merely reflecting a mirrored and sometimes gruesomely distorted image of the world. I am no longer content to think it's glamorous and "artistic" to wallow in all the muck and shit that the world dishes out. More than anything, it is the artist's task to create a better vision, a vision of a better world, or at least one preferable to the one we're living in. As we enter the 1990's I believe it is high time for a renaissance in our thinking as independent artists. So, without shutting our minds to the world around us as it is now, we must always look to the challenge and adventure of the future. **ELECTRONIC COTTAGE** will help to act as a compass, a vehicle, a conduit. There is much work to be done! Electronic audio pioneers and home artists everywhere - Onward!

Everybody who values this publication please subscribe and advertise! The great news about EC is that it is a self-supporting publication! Thanks to you. Please continue to send your suggestions, comments, advice, and constructive criticism, as well as your tapes, records, publications, written works and news of your activities. Keep doing that indie/homemade music thing!! Stay in touch!



Hal McGee, Editor
ELECTRONIC COTTAGE

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Three-Issue Subscription:

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A few additional notes. EC #4 will hopefully be out in July 1990. Included will be articles on S.J. Organisation, Midas Music, John Gullak, Polson Plant Music, John Wiggins, Irre-Tapes and much more! Remember, if your subscription began with EC #1 it is now time for you to re-subscribe - you won't want to miss an issue! I had mentioned to many of you in recent postcards and letters that I was considering the possibility of switching EC over to the larger tabloid size format. After some consideration I have decided against this, because the increase in page size would necessitate a 20-30% display advertising rate increase. So for now the page size will remain the same, but I am going to aim toward publishing EC on a regular consistent schedule every four months. See you in July!

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FEEDBACK

Phinney article unbelievable!

Hal,

Finally! I can't believe it!! An article on a Memphis musician that doesn't brown nose!!! Chris has been a very deserving artist for a rather long time now but in this town unless you play rock a billy or suck up to management you don't stand a chance. I now see that other people realize he has the talent it takes to stand up & get noticed. The article was very enlightening & I enjoyed it very much. Keep up the good work because we out here are desperate for any intelligent life form that is anything from the norm. Thanks again.

Randy Jacobs, Memphis Tennessee

A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE

Dear Hal,

Carl Howard's article ("*The Challenge of the Jam*", **ELECTRONIC COTTAGE, Issue Two**) provided some interesting cultural insights which I'll use as a springboard for some comments of my own.

Carl's rock background no doubt conditioned his preference toward the group or collective composition/performance/improvisation approach to music making. My own classical background conditioned me toward the individual approach, "talented soloists" as he called us.

While I have no statistics concerning the number of improvisation groups around (I was in one for six years, loved it a whole hell of a lot, and miss it immensely), I have no artistic or aesthetic problem with the idea of creating music as an individual. In fact the idea is rather possessive, isn't it? We refer to our individual work as "my music".

Before I go further, let me add that I am in favor of both approaches and have used both, even sometimes in the same piece. I like what Stockhausen said about improvisation. By way of paraphrase he said that improvisation gives the composer an area or arena to freely try new things. The successful events/discoveries that arise from improvising can then be incorporated into (a) composition.

Carl is quite right about the effects of technology on art's contents and methods, but an entire third area has been almost entirely overlooked. And it is one that consciously or unconsciously affects all of us. That area is the listener. 20th Century technology has forged a new kind of audience, a parallel audience to the "group" that goes out to hear music as a group in some kind of performance space. This new audience, unprecedented in any former time or place, is an audience (listener) of ONE.

The entire cassette networking culture shuffles and distributes its created products to that audience of one, the "home listener". I don't even think this is much farther afield than the person who subscribes to the record clubs that so adorn the Sunday paper inserts. Indeed one could argue that while TV and Radio "play" to the "community", ultimately it is heard by the individual listener passively experiencing the music at home or in his car. Such a listener is often alone with this experience, often choosing and preferring this than say going out to a concert. This listener listens in isolation, often exaggerating the "one"ness further by using headphones. Frequently our "audience of one" has amassed an arsenal of recorded music, elaborate high-end stereo systems, and in extreme cases a room in the house custom-designed (acoustically) for music listening. Needless to say, a parallel industry has not only created this audience, but encourages it as well (ironically in the guise of obtaining "Concert hall realism" at home). In case one is tempted to argue that the "home entertainment" industry was for the family, just ask yourself how often your family (as a unit) watches/listens to something together.

OK, OK, so what about the "lonely" blues singer or the individual who plays "for himself/herself"? Ah, but

both of these people are actively playing AND listening (isolated improvisation?). The presence of an audience of more than oneself is not as critical. Moreover, our twin audiences are frequently without much overlap. I've met people who own umpteen "recordings" of a Tchaikovsky *Fifth*, but could care less if they ever "go out" to hear it live. Conversely, I've met others who spend huge sums of money on live concerts, but have very modest stereos and barely a few inches of shelf space allotted for recordings.

So, to return to Carl's concerns. Is it no more hypocritical or "insulated" to be a "lone" creator/"soloist" than it is to be a "lone" audience of one? I see a tape collaboration project as a technology-created solution, rather than a problem or negative. Remember, together the collaborators are still addressing that audience of one. Nevertheless, give me a group, a hall, and a time and I, too, will be there playing. Hey, it takes all kinds.

Michael S. Horwood is a dynamic composer and recording artist with an enormous number of pieces to his credit - everything from string quartets to tape compositions! Write him to find out more at 8 Grovetree Place, Bramalea, Ontario L6S 1S8 Canada.

Testy musical/philosophical differences

Dear Hal.....

As someone with whom you've had lively (some have said testy!!!) musical/philosophical differences, I'm really quite pleased that you enjoyed **AN ACT OF REASON** (cassette by **Allen Planetscapes** reviewed in **EC#2**). In general, I'm really quite pleased generally by the tone of **EC!!**; you've had an energetic/important role in promoting indie artists, and that you've not slackened your support for us has been invaluable.

Being the loudmouth I've a reputation for, I'd like to throw in a few observations.....

Your commitment to freedom of expression is fine, personally I'd like to see no ads by Fascists/Racists, but you've got 'em in **EC!!!** I'm sure you found these folks' ads repugnant, but I also know that I can condemn the fact that few artists you featured have voiced any objections to these idiots' views!!! We in **Allen Planetscapes** know exactly how to deal with these nuts (refer to my letter in **SOUND CHOICE #9**) when we see them, but it'd help if you urged musicians to display openly their contempt for those with Racist/Fascist/Sexist/Culturally Chauvinistic views (perhaps a page or coupon people could tear out & post back to you, signing on to voice their opposition to this nonsense).

I know **Carl Howard** has taken hard blows for some of his views, but I think he's correct when his perspective is taken as someone who wants to play music for a living! The \$ situation in music is terrible in general, deadly in non-commercial musics! **Carl** knows that many involved in the K7 underground aren't attempting this, but I don't think he was addressing them in his article. I do think we need to develop ways of actively helping each other, such as a performance network, or the idea of K7 underground "hotels" in different cities so one could tour more easily (many folks who read this have been to the **Al Margolis**, **Carl Howard/Space Station/Chris Phinney** "Hilton").

This leads me to the next point. As **CH** pointed out (too simplified, in my estimation...he didn't count in European folk aka GYPSY music, nor the Celtic influence of musicians like Alain Stivell!!!) often the mail collaboration can become two players jerking off on the same tape but in different locations! Not to say that any serious music is more culturally valid, but live interaction between players is the norm in most non-Western musics! Things have changed since the influences of World-Class musicians has sunk into the West (guys like Coltrane, Stockhausen, Shankar, Fela, George Lewis, Braxton, Teitelbaum, etc.) it seems that the advent of digital technology, and the isolation & cramped physical space of the era we're in has helped devalue Communal experiences like live music-making! Often, people employ technology that allows them to manipulate music without understanding why it sounds this way...it's easier than learning to play your instrument, practicing to get more proficient to express more, or having the challenge of improvised Composition/Free Music! Perfect for a society that thrives on instant gratification!!! So while I'm not sure

Carl's "in your Face" style sits well with people, we need him to keep it up! He does try to admit to his flaws, a rare thing in most Music Journalists!

Anyway, just the thing you'd expect from a close friend of his, but it's OK.

Keep in touch. Keep it up! **Doug Walker**

Doug Walker is the founder of Allen Planetscapes, one of the hardest-working indie groups around. For more info write to Doug at Galactus Tapes, Space Station Studio, 191-32 116th Ave., St. Albans, NY 11412.

Hey, yo Hal, yo Hey! Hey, yo Hal, yo, Hey!

Hey, yo Hal, yo, Hey!

Your second issue of EC deserves more comments than I'll ever have time to note. First I'll jump around and tell you things that really got to me about the writing in the new issue. Your format is bound to piss people off and draw drastic responses from people who are maligned by the people you choose to write your articles. This is to me the spice of life in the networks.

To cheerfully assume that we're living in one great big self supporting community is ludicrous and simple-minded. The more you try to draw people closer to each other, the more they will find that they disagree mildly or strongly with someone who is as opinionated as they are. Any field of endeavor which supports the opportunity for fame will breed back-stabbing and name-calling. I'd like to think that I'm above this, but I'm sure I'm not.

I'm not so weak as to sit back and agree with every opinion expressed in the pages of your magazine, but there is something to be garnished from virtually everything in this smart publication. Within the same article, or letter I'll agree with a few things and scream out loud at the sheer stupidity of something else. I can't help but supply you with an example: **Carl Howard** (a person that it is hard to be unopinionated about) has clever & smart insights buried in his articles amongst such incomprehensible statements as in the *stunning* use of a quadruple negative "Ain't no pride in not being able to play a scale without faltering". I read this over and over and screamed "**What is he trying to say!!!**" But this is followed by a witty joke which conjures a delightful picture in my mind: "Al Margolis' tours of every city on earth". I can see the concert tour poster now, in the form of a hardbound tomb the size of a large encyclopedia!

The articles on Home Music Projects for kids & **Chris Phinney** were delightful. I've met **Chris** before & the interview does him stunning justice by showing him in a natural light. There is a raw gut-feeling talking to this guy & reading what he writes. This article proves that he doesn't need to sit next to an Oxford Dictionary to be able to choose words to express himself.

Funny that **Darren Copeland** mentioned a need to have more critical approach to reviewing. I'm an avid reader of cassette reviews, and the first thing I do before reading the review is to see who wrote it. To know the reviewer and their tastes is very important to me. I can base my judgements on the value of the review accordingly. I don't mind reviews being too kind to things, as long as I know what the person is getting at & why it strikes the listener as reviewable.

For instance, I've learned more about **Jeph Jerman** through what he reviews than any articles on his label, or any of the interesting letters he sends. I really see what makes him listen and hear things the way he does. This in turn I can use to reflect on how I feel about the **Hands To** tapes he makes.

I suppose I'm rare in that I've never paid much-to-do about sending my works in for review. I don't remember too well about my earliest years, but I'm sure I've not sent a tape for review in five years or so. The tapes I send you are for you to hear what your old pal **Mr. Zan** is doing in the present. If, for some reason it interests you enough to review this will please me because I value your opinion. I was shocked & of course thrilled to see a tape of mine reviewed by **Andrew Orford**. I like this because I didn't send this in for review, and I didn't ask him to review it. It was a sincere & unsolicited response to my work. It's a genuinely superb feeling that somebody can be so positively affected by my works. I was unspeakably flattered and honored to have this work compared to two cassettes (*The Element That Defies Description & All the Truth at Once*) which I've always considered audio masterworks in their own right.

I find that I have a difficult time knowing how I *really* feel about certain tapes I've made over the last few years. I'm much too close to what I do to be able to stand back and opinionate. That's my only regret about not getting reviews or at least significant feedback from the people I send tapes to: I miss the critical look at my own works.

Hal, you must know that I got more out of a scathing letter from you systematically ripping my tape release apart shred by shred, than I did from a hundred letters of bland praise.

There will be another more "printable" letter also enclosed with this package; This is not a personal communique (not that the other one is not personal, I just don't think most of this stuff is worth taking up space in your magazine.)

Got lots more to tell & I'm enclosing an article I hope you like & you may want to use in the next issue. Make it work! **Zan Hoffman**

Zan, I printed this letter instead. Besides, I've trekked far and wide & looked everywhere through the Mountains Of Mail in the other room and I can't find it!

Any way, If you want to write to Zan the address is P.O. Box 4730, Louisville, KY 40204.

Why not have more nude photos in EC?

SUBJECT: ELECTRONIC COTTAGE, what the hell is it? Why the Hell do you publish it? Why not have more Nude Photos and Lonely Person Ads?

Dear Editor,

When I received your magazine I was shocked and bored to find that out of all the magazines I receive, **only** yours was **without** anything even close to entertaining me. I guess that you have mistakenly included me in your mass mailing.

But, I'm not sore. In fact, I'll give you a few tips to increase interest and profit in the future issues.

First of all, no one really cares about Electronic Music.

Second, what the Hell are you talking about? I mean, really!!!! I can tell you discuss music, but, **what the Hell** is Electronic Music? You didn't even mention Wayne Newton (the greatest musician alive today) or Tammie Fae Bakker (the greatest Christian musician today) anywhere in your magazine. It seems that your magazine caters to only one person's taste — YOURS.

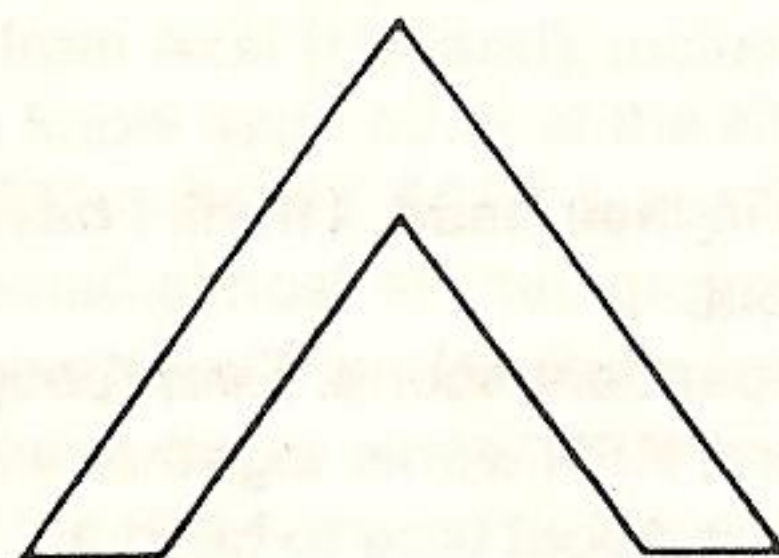
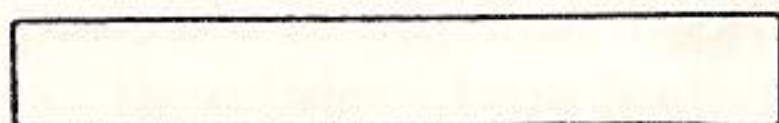
Third, and most importantly, you do not have a single Nude Photo in your magazine! If you wish to be successful in today's market you need **SEXY WOMEN** to sell magazines. I also firmly believe that starting a Lonely Person Ad Department would help in the selling of your magazine.

Yours, **Toby O'Brien**, wild man about town

Note: Please send any nude photos, porno pics or mags (especially from Japanese mags!), or anything disgusting or perverted - CAREFULLY WRAPPED UP AND CONCEALED! - to Toby O'Brien, 1649 W. 73rd Place, Indianapolis, IN 46260.

Dah Jilt Art magazine "the industrial, the surreal, the erotic"
Editor, Terrence Brannon

P.O. Box 87128 Δ Atlanta, GA 30337 Δ (404) 892-1451



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WRITE FOR FREE CATALOGUE

First International Cassette Makers Conference
THE KENTUCKY FRIED ROYALTY MEETING
(Cologne, West Germany, July 11th-15th 1989)
by Lord Litter

Before I tell you how great it was to meet all those people with this one idea in their heart, I think I have to give a short introduction telling what **Kentucky Fried Royalty (KFR)** is all about.

KFR is an association consisting of people who are involved in the real independent scene. Everybody has his/her own activities; together they are the main **KFR** stations. Furthermore, **KFR** works together with all kinds of labels, magazines, radioshows, musicians, etc. etc. We thought that it is about time to build a worldwide solid platform - for ALL real independent people - with several tasks. The two main workingfields including subdivisions are: distribution and promotion of all real indie, homemade products, activities.

The **KFR** distribution offers a simple way to have worldwide distribution meant as a communication level - there is absolutely no desire to become a major distributor. The promotion goes out to the underground as well as to "official" levels - we want to spread the idea amongst "normal" people, 'cause we see "our" movement as part of the positive - pro life - movement that slowly becomes stronger...and this is for all human beings of this mistreated planet.

KFR was founded near the end of 1988. After one year we had four main distribution stations - England, U.S.A., West Germany and South America (Argentina), and the **KFR News Department** in West Berlin. The West German station (S.H.M. Tapes) organises concerts and other events in the Rhenania cultural center in Cologne; so it was obvious that the first **KFR** meeting was a combination of **KFR** conference, tape fair and concerts.

In the daytime the **KFR** members were working out the **KFR** statutes, based on several years of solid experience. **Stephen Parsons** (**KFR** England) has been running his **BBP** distribution since the beginning of the Eighties, so he could give some quite good indications how it all works. Each of the **KFR** members joined the real independent level because of different reasons, and were coming from different spheres of operation...all this went into the **KFR** statutes. Sure those discussions were joined by tape people who arrived in the daytime. So suggestions and apprehensions were considered and **KFR** feels quite happy with the statutes now. The sun was shining and we were sitting in the garden of the Rhenania cultural center...so you can imagine we had a great time - though the discussions were really hot!!!

In the afternoon of each day tables were set up and the people presented their products to an admittedly small audience, to each other and to some journalists from magazines and from the Cologne radiostation. In the evening of the first three days there were performances and small concerts - in the end of the week there was a two day festival with local groups which were all featured on a cassette sampler done especially for this event.

For such a "small and unimportant" event we had real good results - an article in one of Cologne's "official" newspapers and a one hour report on the "official" radiostation. But most important: the people who were in Cologne made new contacts and friends. Musicians who did not even know about each other are in close contact now, are working together, and several new projects were planned...and **KFR** works on a solid level now. Everybody knows exactly what he/she has to do.

To me the whole week was a nonstop talk and information exchange. There were not thousands of screaming tape fans - but it was the right amount to have a good conversation with everyone. It was a wonderful feeling to realise that it really does not matter what someone's profession is or if he or she is styled in a groovy way - if you are a "Rocker", a "Folkie" or an extreme "Experimental Freak" - we all became friends within minutes. It did not matter if he or she was 15 or 50 - we were all talking with the same tongue longing for the same aim: We are all equal and everybody can do it!!!!

It was obvious that most of the people were from Europe but **Jennifer** from **KFR U.S.A.** could give some

very good information about the "direct support" that is quite common in the U.S.A. This convinced me to expand my contacts in this direction.

It is possible to say that the KFR meeting was just a part of a movement that seems to start over here in Europe - tape fairs - tape festivals...all kinds of meetings.

A real interesting tape event took place in Holland in September '89, organised by the **HAHAMANDAD** label from Axel (Holland), including concerts, tape fair and body and video performances. Many people who got to know each other at the KFR meeting met again in Holland.

TURN-A-BOUT TAPES and **SDV TONTRAEGER**, two labels from Duesseldorf, West Germany, presented almost all their groups - about 20 - at a two days festival - many innovative new groups!!! Again a big meeting of friends - there I met for the first time **Alain Neffe** from **Insane Music** (Belgium), who has been very active since the middle of the Seventies!!!

Another big event took place in Berlin again with tape fair, concerts, performances, films and so-called "Space times" where everybody could do some improvisation. It was called "Es Zuckt" and was documented on film.

People start to visit each other - so I have some kind of "open house" now - my guest list is already very long, including friends from Norway and Japan. This is a whole new movement - people leave the "isolation" of homerecording and build a new cultural level of direct communication...it does not matter if you are black, white, red, yellow...or green - we are all one!!!

All this was just a start. In 1990 the next KFR meeting will take place in London - then the first KFR shop will be already opened, also in London. A real start for a new cultural and alternative music level is taking place at the moment. We all know that it will still take a while to make it all known to our brothers and sisters - to our uncles and aunts - grandpas and grannys...but there is nothing to stop us... I'm very positive!!!!!!

Love - Lord Litter

For more information about KFR please contact: KFR News Department: Lord Litter - DITTMAR, Pariser Str. 63A, 1000 Berlin 15, West Germany. telephone 030 (Berlin) 883 68 54. Pictured below at the TURN-A-BOUTS Festival, from left to right: Claus Korn (Individual Pop), H.J. Koehnen (Turn-a-bout), Alain Neffe (Insane), Guido Erfen (KFR Germany), Lord Litter (KFR News), SACK (Scheisskasten), Roman and Torti (N.G. Medien).



THE CURRENT SITUATION OF REALLY INDEPENDENT MUSIC IN WEST GERMANY

by Uwe Hamm-Furholter

*"When there's no underground here we've to import one then!"
(quote from an interview with U.H.F.)*

In the German music scene, the independent music scene merely, there's a lack of new, innovative and original sounds and artists nowadays. This doesn't mean there's no one at all, as people like **Lord Litter** (Berlin) will certainly agree; but today the independent artists of the last few years are mostly with major record companies or have ceased to exist. We are in a situation comparable to the mid- and late-70's. Everyone's waiting for a new musical revolution. Till this will happen (?) one revival follows another, and all kinds of cross culture are mixed ('Ska-cid'). On the other hand we see an inflational use of terms and words to sell more copies of a certain product - in German music magazines and ads everyone seems to be "hard-core", "industrial", "underground" and "extreme"! It's a bit frightening to see this phenomenon, when on the other side less and less people do know **Throbbing Gristle**, early **Psychic TV**, and **Whitehouse**, amongst others which were really innovative and original (at their time). Today even guitar bands claim to be of that kind of tradition. No way!

Instead the underground music makers are producing more and more; everyone can be a musician (they just need an Amiga and a double tape-deck). But as too much is produced, or better: too much crap, the interested ones lose the oversight - and even the interest. Mags review nothing but records and CDs, no cassettes, and so every little band tries to put out a record. At least in Germany. If there's a publication with a slight independent touch they might leave an entire page (DIN A4) for tapes. There seems to be no more need or interest. Far off from these "mainstream" publications there exist a dozen fanzine-like mags. Mostly xeroxed and type-written (with bad lay-out), they only reach a limited number of people. Plus they do too much self-promotion and are often too bound in the variety of their topics. There surely is a need and place for another kind of information source - but who's gonna do it?! We don't even have private or college radio stations (except a few stations who are 150% commercial) to play independent music. The exception here is Berlin with a free radio and maybe one or two stations of more alternative or pirate background. That's it.

So how should people with no knowledge of labels or artists get to know about interesting products, especially from the tape scene and network? German labels of experimental (electronic) music suffer from self-assurance! They only produce for few people or to get other cassettes through trading. Either they don't want any more publicity (?) or they can't do better. Or the quality is too bad for more (in that case there's better possibilities in the States). Home tapers do produce some interesting music in this country, but the step to release a record is most times too expensive. And labels are far more interested in big hits and/or famous names. And the same situation happens with independent record stores, discos, etc.

There is an interest for new independent music here. But things have to be re-organized. There must be a new kind of networking. And not only for independent music, but also for films, video, art, mixed media, literature. Instead of creating one's own universe all should work with each other (sounds very pathetic, I know). And we have to be more critical in reviewing releases - just because it's a home made tape doesn't mean it deserves a bonus. Otherwise people will continue making more and more bootlegs of "cult" bands, which is the easiest way. Only interesting music and good quality and objective information reviews can help the independent (cassette) scene to be an alternative to the major record business. And/or there has to be a kind of German **RRRECORDS** or **GENERATIONS UNLIMITED** to push independent music. The Nineties are here!

This text is intended to be my PERSONAL opinion and not the one of **ARTWARE**, as I also got a label **A/I/I/P**. It only shows my subjective viewpoint and the experiences I have had.

Uwe Hamm-Furholter operates ARTWARE, one of the world's finest and largest distributors of products of a harsh, extreme, electronic, experimental, avant garde and independent nature. Write for ARTWARE's gigantic catalog of hundreds of cassettes, records, videos, CDs, magazines and books. Contact: Artware, c/o Uwe Hamm-Furholter, Tanusstrasse 38, 6200 Wiesbaden, West Germany.

EXPATRIATE THOUGHTS ON THE CULTURAL ASPECTS OF IMPROVISATION

By Dick Metcalf (aka Rotcod ZZaj)

I've been told there are only limited editions on approach to matters improvisational; which matters not a hoot, since any enlightenment received from a "textbook" would/could not possibly equate to the true spirit (as I perceive it, anyway) of improvisation...

...At any rate, what I really want to throw at you is a question... How does society/culture affect attitudes towards improvisation? My last nine years have been spent (for the most part, anyway) in Korea... There is an 'attitude' here about approach to "life" in general, mostly influenced by Confucius' followers that says - "Don't talk/just DO"... Recent horrific experiences in both Korea and China show some flaws in that approach when it's applied to the political arena... While the struggle is a necessary one (and the battles MUST be fought, since there will ALWAYS be those eager to 'control' others' thoughts), some things (on the political battleground anyway), must be thought out first, and targets selected/affected that will sway the powermongers' minds toward conciliation; but in matters more important, i.e., LIFE and the living of it (which CERTAINLY must encompass the arts), there is (by my interpretation) no BETTER approach...

DOING things is the only way to experience a valid improvisational experience... And when that's done as a matter of course (the CULTURAL aspect I alluded to), it BECOMES a way of life... Life becomes an improvisational experience.

Observing the States from afar (as I have done for the bulk of the last 25 years), it is easy to see that our societal/cultural propensity for ORGANIZATION/ORDER has led us to a state where improvisation and its practitioners are definitely the "odd-men-out"... Even the DOING of things is hampered by some jaded concept (related to ORDER) of the way things are SUPPOSED to be done... Then improvisation becomes a matter of CARNIVAL/CIRCUS!; something for the 'regular' folks to make fun of; and who needs that? Of course, that's no put down for those who daily practice the idea of LIVING improvisation in the land of Yuppies... It's only to say that there are cultural BLOCKS to being very successful at it there...

SO - What to do? Continue... DO... Improvise! ...and integrate east/west hither/yon up/down wherever/ whenever/however you can; particularly when it helps to defeat the STRUCTURE imposed by the 'normals' already born/bred into the webs of concrete that have grown up around them! More later...

There are many interesting Rotcod ZZaj tapes available - be sure to write for more information. Contact: Rotcod ZZaj, c/o Dick Metcalf, HQ, 19th SUPCOM, P.O. Box 2879, APO 96218.

SENTIRE: TO HEAR, TO FEEL, TO SENSE

by Darren Copeland

Introductory note: This essay was not intended to voice an opinion that was mine before it was written. Instead it was a way of echoing some new musical influences that I was under at the time.

Since April of 1989 (when "Sentire" was written) all my musical compositions have drawn from the sonic environment for working materials. I hope that "Sentire" will offer insight into the musical circus around us. October 1989.

THE SONIC ENVIRONMENT

John Cage said that music is the sounds that accompany our daily lives. This music is vital, and loaded with meaning and explanations. It gives clues to how sensitive we are to the people we share a space with, or to how conducive an environment is for allowing us to feel at ease. Unfortunately, people have become very indifferent to the sounds they are making and hearing, as noise is a term that goes hand in hand with our modern society. Machinery is built to perform work and provide us with useful services, but does not sustain peace and harmony for our ears, and perhaps more importantly, for our nerves.

The sounds inhabiting our daily life can be likened to a symphony, or what R. Murray Schafer called "A great macro-cultural composition" (1). In other words, our ears are being treated to a huge, everlasting concert, in which we play the roles of composer, performer, and listener. However, our composition attempts are not up to snuff with the models that nature has provided us with. For instance, the physiological make up of the human anatomy is designed to function as silently as possible. It filters out sub-frequencies, like our brainwaves and our bloodstream, and sets parameters to our threshold of hearing and our threshold of pain. The design of our industrial machinery has failed in regarding the value of silence in our sonic environment. Silence embodies peace and tranquility, and permits us to live a life with a minimum of unneeded disturbances. Our sonic environment has been stretched in complexity to a point where people no longer want to deal with it. It talks a language that is beyond our understanding, which eventually phases us out from listening closely to what the environment is saying to us. As a result, we invent the Sony Walkman to mask the mundane drone of our traffic and our commuter subways. How can the quality of our sonic environment be upgraded if we insist on ignoring its presence?

The shortcomings of our sonic environment reflect an increasing separation between ourselves and the natural world. The more reliant we are on technology, the more distanced we are from nature. This is apparent in how we are no longer synchronized with the rhythms of nature. The mechanical clock has replaced the observation of natural elements, like the stars or the climate, as a human synchronizer. Our behavioural rhythms have lost sight of nature's unifying influence. Likewise, our rhythms are sporadic, individual, and out-of-phase with nature and ourselves.

Through losing touch with this common unifier we become apathetic towards our surroundings. This affects the fidelity of our sonic environment, which weakens in quality when our carelessness strengthens. It is this carelessness, or ignorance, that has shaped our sonic environment into what it is today. Music, for example, is a means of relating to the environment through making sounds. Our difficulty is that we don't relate to the environment with the same sensitivity with which a musician relates to his music. We reduce the role of the sonic environment to something that is uninteresting, redundant, and insignificant. As a consequence, it is treated in a neglectful way that does more damage than good.

NOISE

Herman von Helmholtz, in The Sensations Of Tone, describes noise as a sonorous body that contains non-periodic wave patterns. Unlike the periodic patterns of a 'musical' tone. However, Helmholtz's description is too simplistic for our times, so communications engineers have refined it: "When someone is transmitting a message, any sounds or interferences which impair to accurate transmission and reception are referred to as noise." (2)

Therefore, to the ears of our modern society, noise is a word that indicates an interference or an unwanted sound. Static from a radio signal or a telephone connection are a couple of the noises that impose on our reception of a sound signal. The judgement of what sounds are wanted and unwanted is entirely a subjective matter. Its decision relies on a number of psychological, sociological and physical factors. For example, the acoustic behavior of a room, or the cultural signals and symbols that a sound (i.e. a bell) might carry, or the state of mind of the person hearing the sound.

Schopenhauer observed that our sensitivity to music is inversely related to the amount of noise we can resist without distraction. The more selective our perception of music is, the more susceptible we are to disturbances. This is an important factor to consider when analyzing our relationship with the sonic environment. In other words, how dedicated are we to listening attentively to the sounds around us? If listening became a more vital requirement for our survival than our urban centres might not have been the great mesh of sonic chaos that they are. Therefore, everything comes down to what we make it. If we treat our sonic environment reluctantly, through carelessly poisoning it with our inefficient use of physical energy (i.e. an engine sound), then that is what we will get back in return. Hence, the sensitive use of listening as a means of eliminating our blind acceptance of noise.

The sounds of technology are the most abrasive sounds man has ever come across. These sounds have the potential of affecting one's physical and psychological well-being. Low frequency vibrations from subway trains have a direct effect on our nervous system, and yet we are unaware of the changes that take place inside of us. Pre-technological civilizations never got exposed to sounds that exceeded the amplitude of their own voices. In our post-industrial age, the sound pressure level of the overall ambience of most cities has increased by one decibel each year. Therefore, not only our lakes and skies are being polluted, but our opportunities for silent recomposure are being stamped out altogether.

However, the problem of noise pollution has gone beyond being ignorant of the importance of listening carefully and respecting silence. We have used the environment as an outlet for receiving lots of attention and immediate feedback. Noise is an aural gesture that can embody power, progress and profit. In fact, it is a feather in one's cap of self-importance, as there is a mystique that is contained in something that is big, black, ugly and terribly noisy. The mystery is very important to people who are looking for a powerful identity, because it exceeds the potential of any human being. In other words, it's a way of demonstrating that one possesses something that is more powerful and dangerous than that over which the common person could ever have control.

Essentially, if this proliferation of excessive noise is ever going to be controlled, then we must let go of our insistence on being heard. Pollution will only occur if we are careless towards our environment. Noise pollution can only be solved through taking an active interest in the sounds around us. The will for good listening must be enlisted into our daily habits, as an awareness has to be promoted for discovering what sounds we want to preserve, to encourage, to multiply, and to eliminate. Disguising sonic environments with pink noise or muzak does not provoke healthy listening habits. Actually, it asks us not to listen at all, or to simply tune out and deal only with the work at hand. A positive working environment should not be dehumanized. It should be a reflective environment that does not require a person to behave loudly in order to be heard. For instance, the sound of our own footsteps should never be drowned out by the ambient noise of an acoustic space. Eliminating the necessity of being 'loud to be heard' is our first step in creating an environment that is conducive to nature's sensitivity to silence and peace of mind.

"Part of the problem with the New York environment is that it's composed unconsciously, the sounds are composed unconsciously. The city is a collective composer, and that composer has simply not got the appropriate motivation for peace of mind, because the object is to get a lot of feedback, terrific attention, and it feels like work is being done. He knows he's done something. The guy on the motorcycle revs up through the canyons of Wall Street, he knows he's got a lot of power; you hear it and feel it. He demonstrates his power that way and understands that the machine is operating. That's true of all the appliances and mechanical devices across the board: they could be made very quiet, but it wouldn't then give the operator the feedback - it gives him a sense of power."

-Pauline Oliveros (3)

LISTENING

Hearing is our way of touching from a long distance. It is a sense that refuses to shut down willingly, as it is the last one to fall asleep and the first one to awaken. When one loses one's sight, the ears take over for providing the necessary details about the surroundings which a sighted person normally takes for granted.

Being aware of sound is perhaps more important than using it for a specific purpose. We must insure that

contact is always being made with the acoustic environment, which requires a very conscious effort on our part. Simply because, an individual can get away with merely listening to, instead of listening for. For example, a warrior knows instinctively that we primarily use our eyes when searching for something. Therefore, he hides his visual presence, and uses his ears to detect the whereabouts of his enemy. The difference between listening to and listening for is like the difference between seeing and looking. Listening for and looking require that our perceptions are guided by thought and sincere concentration, as opposed to the superficial evidence that seems sufficient enough to lead us from one day to the next.

If we wish to constitute a policy of good, clean acoustic communication then we must break through our reliance on mere eyesight and superficial evidence to make decisions. To illustrate, people in the Renaissance stopped conceiving the image of God through loud rumblings from the skies or huge gusts of wind, and started portraying Him mostly through portraiture. We must transcend our awareness of being a visual culture, and begin building within ourselves the recognition that all senses perform in consort with one another. Otherwise, our vulnerability to simplistic visual information will lead us into an environmental deafness. Our machines will exceed the parameters for our pain thresholds; our peaceful country retreats will be sacrificed for the erection of godly skyscrapers; and our excessively noisy urban centres will dominate the level of our own functional noise. Therefore, the practise of good listening can not only restore the importance of silence and peace of mind, but can become a saviour in a world that is subjected to a decadent array of harsh noises and low frequency stomach rumblers. The restoration of silence is the fundamental key to creating sonic environments that provoke a keen listening awareness. Silence is the pavement that all sounds walk on, and high quality sonic environments are built from the bottom up. This is where the level of Noise is turned down, so that the task of unifying the importance of sound-producer, environment and listener is turned up! Our culture must simply put an end to the hierarchical divisions of our senses, so that we can break free from our over-simplification of their use.

ENDNOTES

1. R. Murray Schafer (ed.), FIVE VILLAGE SOUNDSCAPES (Vancouver: A.R.C. Publications, 1977).
2. R. Murray Schafer, THE NEW SOUNDSCAPE; HANDBOOK FOR THE MODERN MUSIC TEACHER (Don Mills: BMI Canada, 1969)
3. Peggyann Wahtel, "Meet The Composer: Pauline Oliveros", EAR New Music News, vol. 12, no. 9.

Contact Darren Copeland at his new address: 4288 Grange St., #B-1008, Burnaby, B.C., V5H 1P2 Canada.

LOBOTOMY IS NEVER OK

by Walter Alter

With noise and its implied formlessness there is finally the overt statement of a covert dilemma: societies throughout the world have been rendered formless by the manifestations of alternating current electricity. Within this ambience of electronic invention, noise music does what an accurate art form does: it defines a thing to be, rather than reflect a thing which is. Noise predicts too well for the comfort of orthodoxy and challenges the ability of extant musical forms in their capacity to act as cultural vehicle for the varieties and densities of information we experience via the computer, phone/FAX, print and broadcast media. Information is dissolving culture. Noise is dissolving music. The imperative of human intellect and learning is that new info replaces old info. If the old info is calcified, sacrosanct or otherwise useful for the control of populations, then the recreation of plasticity is initially painful, confusing, or if you ask a Brahmin, anathema.

Styles and genres in art have, in the past, defined cultures or epochs within cultures. But the epochs become shorter and shorter in proportion to the exponential increase in information influx. Nostalgia is beginning to occur almost simultaneously with events. We refer to the Reagan years, the Iran-Contra period,

the Yuppie era and so on as time reference points in cultural space. Add to that the Tienanmen, Glasnost and Drug-War media events and it's easy to see how art forms are unable to keep up with the info tsunami. Graffiti was a valiant attempt, but was shackled by its intrinsic reliance upon steam age spray pneumatic/hydraulics. Even computer art is fundamentally anachronistic, fractals and all, insofar as it is photo-chemical in essence, occurring as a point of focus along a sequence and not as an area of dispersal depicting parallel events. Marshall McLuhan observed that new technology retains many characteristics of the old, i.e. computers operated from typewriter keyboards. This inability to let go of obsolete forms and embrace what is next is the essence of reactionary thinking. Technology, not the Trotskyites, provides us with the potential for permanent revolution, and within the domain of free conceptualization, artists should be immersing themselves into the global village information tide with skill and confidence.

Information is quantitatively self-amplifying, the more you have the smarter you is. As societies increase their intelligence, pulse fronts are built up due to resistance and then burst preparatory to reintegration, re-patterning and so on. Glasnost and the current thaw in Cold War thinking was made possible by the action of TV media giving us a picture of "the enemy" which broke the stereotypes jammed down humanity's throat by the respective governments. During the Tienanmen Square uprising, reporters were harder pressed to smuggle in handycams than to file their stories. All events are media events, the more transformative they are the noisier they are.

Applied to music, the increase of information or event density is bound to sort out the phases of cultural pulsing, if music is to be perceived as a cultural attribute rather than an impediment. Musicians working with noise are essentially working with complexity. There is no such thing as random in this universe. The perception of randomness is merely our inability to sense a more complex structure. Noise music forces us to engage that part of our intelligence capable of synthesizing meaning from within an overload situation and reinsert the capability of making a choice, the sorts of choices we make when listening to a challenging piece of music such as - which thematic line or instrument to follow, which content elements run parallel and which ones disperse or intersect, what states of mind/emotion are being engaged and for what purposes, and so on. With noise music, we are faced with the same sorts of puzzles we are facing within our present phase of electronic media evolution. Even the corporate giants are refusing to acknowledge the pressures which are building up which require independent, autonomous access to previously monopolist controlled technology, i.e. the controversy over digital audio technology. The media giants are waking up to their death. No more centralized rationing, no more star system, no more buyer's market surplus of artists clawing their way to distribution contracts, no more focal point feed of ideology or party line or melody line. Why anarchists find themselves uncomfortable with this breakup in control structures is beyond me. Perhaps it's the contradiction between the anti-technology doctrine and observed phenomena.

There is certainly an observable shying away from noise music on the part of the arbiters of underground tendencies. Possibly this is due to job burnout and the loss of adventure within the hardcore/thrash end of it. My hypothesis states that noise music is at a point where its propellents are due for a little updating. Noise and thrash are no longer justified as a reaction to Gotterdammerungian fate for humanity, particularly in the face of Glasnost. Bio/eco Armageddon simply cannot substitute for big kinds of bangs in the Weltschmerz race. There is a discernible effort being made by the mandarins of style to leverage the thing into the New Age-sphere of influence. Perhaps there is a sense that the emerging structures and confusions require a tranquil approach. My view is that lobotomy is never OK. Obviously, nothing is going to get discovered via the bliss approach. Music will sink to the level of snake oil remedy and beyond, to carrier frequency for hypno-programming. Noise music is restless enough to inform its structures with break-out potential like no other kind of music. Besides, it's easy to get started. You don't need a doctorate from Juilliard, or an attitude problem or a fistful of dollars. No artificial standards. Audio quality is not a problem. This musical art form is O-P-E-N.

Walter Alter is an eclectic sound, video and word artist with a number of interesting audio and written works available. Contact him at Baby Brain Tapes, 7 Grace Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

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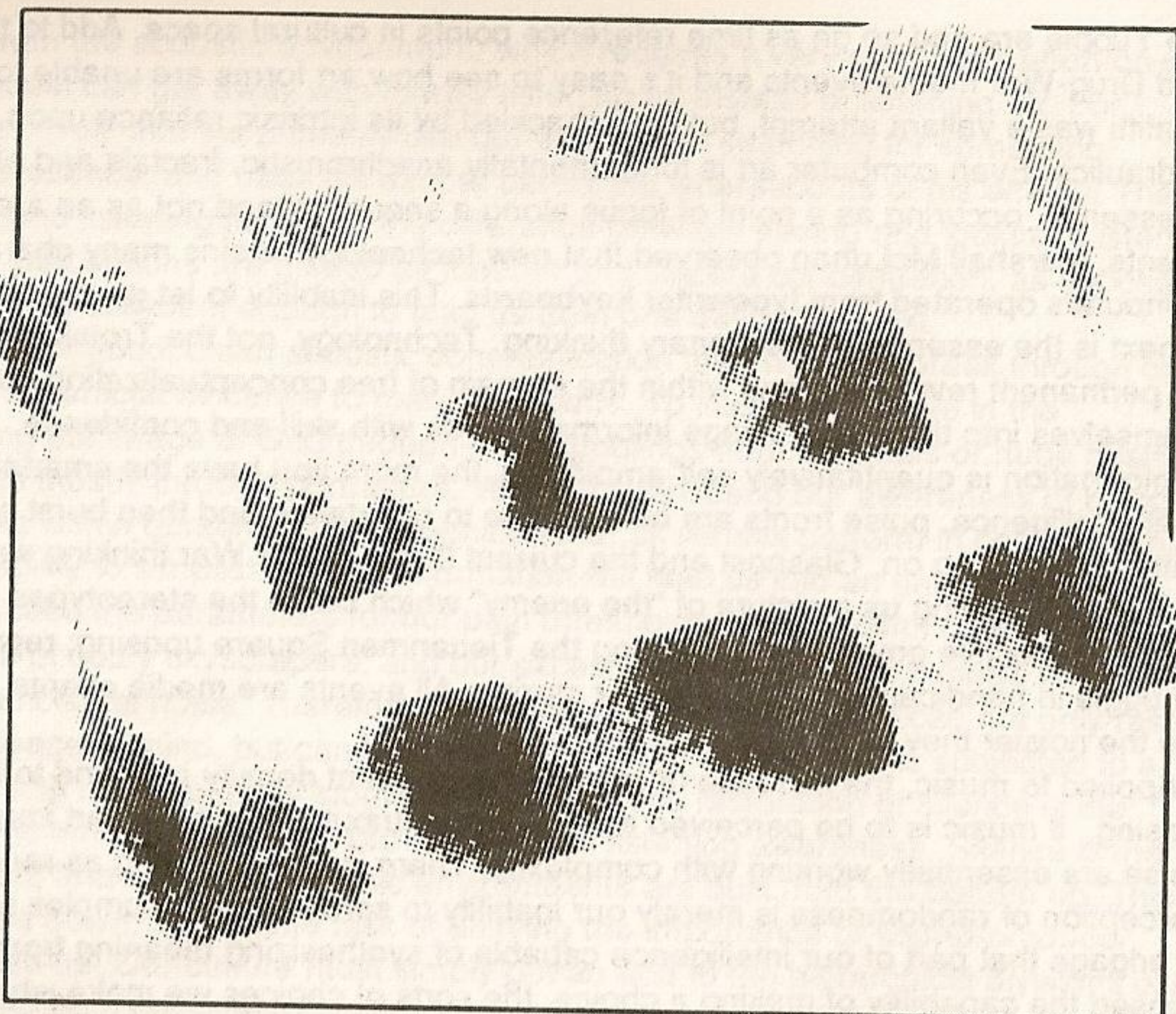
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XKurzhen Sound

By Chris Phinney

AHH, YES ONE HAPPENING LABEL SPOTLIGHT THIS ISSUE THATS FOR SURE!! AND WITH MY PARTNER & COHORT IN CRIME-MIKE JACKSONS OUT OF SIGHT XKURZHEN SOUND LABEL. WELL KIDDIES THIS ONES FOR REAL!! ONE OF THE BETTER LABELS IN THE U.S.A. GOING STRONG TODAY & THE MANS MUSIC IS REALLY SMOKIN. ENUFF SAID, ON WITH THE BEEF!!

XKURZHEN SOUND WAS STARTED AS A VEHICLE FOR MIKES SOLO WORKS, KNOWN AS CEPHALIC INDEX. THE LABEL ORIGINALLY STARTED OUT IN MEMPHIS, BUT HAS SINCE MOVED TO BOSTON. MIKE BEGAN MAKING NOISE TAPES AT AGE 13, (I REMEMBER SEEING HIM SNEAK IN AT SKOPTZIES GIGS AT THE ANTENNA-WHEN HE WAS A WEE TOT!! HA HA) ALSO SOON AFTER THE SKOPTZIES BROKE UP & VIKTIMIZED KARCASS WAS BORN MIKE JOINED VK AFTER THE FIRST THREE TAPES WERE RELEASED & WAS AN AVID MEMBER PLAYING BASS, TAPES, NOISE, VOCALS UNTIL HE MOVED TO BOSTON. ON RARE OCCASIONS MIKE STILL GETS TOGETHER WITH THE KARCASS WHEN HES IN TOWN. ALSO MIKES HEAVILY INVOLVED FULL TIME WITH HARSH REALITY HOUSE BANDS CANCEROUS GROWTH & THE NEWER HOUSE BAND IMBROGLIO.

ANYHOW XKURZHEN SOUND THE LABEL WAS BORN IN 1986 & WAS STARTED FOR FUN & FOR THE REASON STATED ABOVE. IN 1986 ARMED WITH A 4 TRACK, SYNTHS & TAPES MIKE RECORDED TWO SESSIONS & STARTED CEPHALIC INDEX. THEN HE GOT A RADIO SHACK MIXER & REVERB, PLUS ACCESS TO A REEL TO REEL MACHINE WITH WHICH HE DISCOVERED LOOPS. READY & ARMED JACKSON SET UP A SMALL ROOM STUDIO, & RELEASED 3 TAPES THE FIRST SIX MONTHS. ALSO IN 1986 CONTACT WAS SET UP WITH MARIO MARZIDOVSEK OF YUGOSLAVIA FOR XKS FIRST RELEASE BY ANOTHER ARTIST. XK RELEASED SEVEN TAPES IN 1986 INCLUDING COLLABORATIONS WITH ZAN HOFFMANS ZIDSICK LABEL.

IN 1987 JACKSON BEGAN CONSIDERING THE LABEL MORE AS A CREATIVE VEHICLE TO CARRY HIS OWN MUSIC & OTHER UNDERGROUND GROUPS/ARTISTS, TO "HELP GET IT OUT THERE" SO TO SPEAK. NETWORKING A LOT MORE, ESTABLISHING NEW CONTACTS, XK RELEASED 20 TAPES THIS YEAR INCLUDING TAPES BY THE HATERS, VIKTIMIZED KARCASS, MENTAL ANGUISH, DAVE PRESCOTT, DOG AS MASTER, CANCEROUS GROWTH, BWANA/HUDAK, COMPILATIONS & MUCH MORE. AS FOR CI A PURCHASE OF A CASIO SK1 TO ADD TO THE ARSENAL CONTRIBUTED TO THE NEXT SIX CEPHALIC INDEX RELEASES EXCEPT FOR "BEING" TO CARL HOWARDS (AUDIOFILE TAPES) REQUEST OF NO SAMPLING ON AT'S RELEASE. CI TOOK A TURNING POINT IN THE SUMMER WITH THE PURCHASE OF AN ARP ODYSSEY & THE RELEASE OF "SYNDROME". JACKSON THEN BEGAN TO TAKE HIS MUSIC A BIT MORE SERIOUSLY. CI RECORDED "ABREACTION" WHILE HOLED UP FOR A MONTH IN BOSTON - CHECKING IT OUT & SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING A MOVE THERE. CI THEN RETURNED TO MEMPHIS TO RECORD THE NEXT FOUR TAPES AS WELL AS A LIVE SHOW ON WEVL RADIO DURING THE MYSTERY HEARSAY INTERNATIONAL SHOW. CI ALSO RECORDED THE MATERIAL FOR "TRANSPLANT" WHILE STILL IN MEMPHIS.

SO XKURZHEN SOUND MADE THE BIG MOVE IN 1988 TO BOSTON & SET UP A NEW STUDIO. CI RELEASES 8 TAPES & FORMS COLLABORATIONS WITH SCOTT EWEN (TINNITUS), SUNNY CUBA, CARL HOWARD & GENCH MUSICIANS. XK BEGINS TO RELEASE FEWER AMOUNTS OF TAPES BUT IS WIDENING THE SCOPE SHOWING THAT XK IS NOT A "NOISE" LABEL (NOR WAS IT EVER) WITH THE RELEASE OF THE PATRONIZED HUMOPLASMS CASSETTE. ALSO CEPHALIC INDEX PLAYS FIRST LIVE GIG BESIDES RADIO AT THE BAR NONE IN BROOKLYN. (I MIGHT ADD THAT THIS WAS ONE HELL OF A SHOW, IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A CANCEROUS GROWTH GIG! BUT I COULDN'T MAKE IT DUE TO MY RIDE BEING TOTALLED OUT, SO PHONED JACKSON & SAID DO CI GIG INSTEAD.)

IN 1989 SO FAR XK HAS RELEASED 11 TAPES INCLUDING THE FIRST COMPILATION OF BOSTON AREA ARTISTS "REELING TIME IN THE PATH FACTORY"! CONTINUING TO DO ELECTRONICS & MORE WITH THE EXPERIMENTAL/JAZZ/WHATEVER GENCH GROUP. RELEASED BOSTON ARTISTS FUGE, TINNITUS & HEAD SQUALOR FOR THE FIRST TIME. FUTURE RELEASES INCLUDE A SUNNY CUBA COLLECTION OF IMPROVISATIONS & OTHER JAMS. A COMPILATION TRACK BY CANCEROUS GROWTH ON THE 4TH GRINDSTONE PROJECT PUT OUT BY K2 CITY STUDIO, THIS TIME A COMPACT DISC! XKURZHEN SOUND IS OPEN MINDED TO ANY & ALL FORMS OF MUSIC. XK DOESN'T GUARANTEE A RELEASE SO SEND A DEMO COPY OF WHAT YOU WANT TO RELEASE FIRST, IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO POSSIBLY HAVE YOUR MUSIC RELEASED ON THE XKURZHEN SOUND LABEL. AS FOR CI THE COLLABORATIONS CONTINUE, MORE TAPE COLLAGE WORK. ALSO 89 HAS BROUGHT ON JACKSON'S TWO PERSONAL CI FAVES "INCONGRUENCE" & "OOT'S NEW FAMIL TUNES".

AS FOR MIKE JACKSON-THE BRAINS BEHIND CEPHALIC INDEX & XKURZHEN SOUND THE MAN CAN REALLY BEND AN EAR!!WITH HIS ARSENAL CONSISTING OF AN ARP ODYSSEY, LEXICON LXP1,DIGITECH 7.6 DELAY,FOSTEX X15,3TAPE DECKS,ELECTRIC & ACCOUSTIC GUITARS,VARIOUS PERCUSSION,RECORDED SOUNDS,MOOG SONIC 5 FOR PROCESSING & FOUND OBJECTS CEPHALIC INDEX IS CHURNING OUT SOME MIND BLOWING MUSIC OF SONIC POTENTIAL.JACKSON IS INFLUENCED BY JOHN CAGE-WHO OPENED THE DOORS OF SOUND A LITTLE MORE & HELPED MIKE REALIZE THAT THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ALMOST ENDLESS.JACKSON IS ALSO INFLUENCED BY ELECTRONIC MUSIC FROM XENAKIS, STOCKHAUSEN & MUSIQUE CONCRET TO THE MORE HARSH SO CALLED "NOISE"GROUPS OF THE EARLY 70'S & EARLY 80's.ALSO BY JAZZ MUSICIANS LIKE ERIC DOLPHY & ORNETTE COLEMAN AS WELL AS BANDS LIKE HENRY COW,FAUST,AMCN DULL & KING CRIMSON.....

THE FUTURE & DIRECTION OF CEPHALIC INDEX IS TO WORK MORE IN COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHERS PREFERING LIVE & NOT MAIL COLLABORATIONS,ESPECIALLY JAMMING WITH WITH CHRIS P.FOR CANCEROUS GROWTH & SCOTT E.FOR TINNITUS WHO ACCORDING TO JACKSON ARE BOTH IN THEIR OWN WAYS CHALLENGING & RELAXING TO PLAY WITH IF THAT MAKES ANY SENSE.EACH OUTING IS PROGRESSIVELY DIFFERENT.THERE IS NO SPECIFIC DIRECTION FOR CI,JUST TAKE IN ALL THATS AROUND HIM & CREATE SOMETHING CI HAS NEVER HEARD THAT HE WANTS TO HEAR.JACKSON(CI)DOESNT OFTEN RECORD A TRACK & GO BACK TO IT TRYING TO ADD SOMETHING ANYMORE!!JACKSON(CI)PREFERS IT TO BE MORE OF A REALIZATION EITHER IMPROVISED OR ROUGHLY PRE-PLANNED.CI TRYS NOT TO GET USED TO RECORDING A CERTAIN WAY BUT RATHER EXPERIMENT.

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people in the network Miekal and had told about me, and a couple of people in Iowa City I hadn't known about suddenly showed up with some work. Also, a vague (at the time) acquaintance named F. John Herbert got a copy from a mutual friend and said he was interested in its possibilities. John, together with Mel Andringa, was then and is now the Iowa City performance company the Drawing Legion. (Mel taught Multimedia at the University of Iowa, and I took his class.) Really, if it hadn't been for Miekal and John Herbert, I might not have seen any reason to do a second issue.

The Networking Thing. The networking thing for me was begun with Miekal's letter, who was a great one for getting the word around, and for supplying his own work. I sent an announcement thing to Ray Johnson (who I found out about in Mel's Multimedia class), the famous mail artist, who sent me \$2 for the next two issues. I was thrilled. Next I heard from Crag Hill and DiMichele (now Score publications) from the Bay area, California. After that I don't remember who came next. It was this kind of encouragement that enabled PhotoStatic to remain a bimonthly magazine for over 5 years.

On Audio Cassettes and the Space Weenies. In 1984 I became interested in cassettes and put out the first in a series of semiyearly PhonoStatic cassette releases. Paul Neff was guest editor of the first one, which featured our "band" the Space Weenies' only recording, a cover of the Flipper song "Brainwash". (The Space Weenies took their name from an Oscar Mayer advertisement that showed people at a picnic with a clumsily montage of hot dogs in the sky with perfect swirls of squirted mustard running one end to the other. The picnickers looked like they were under attack from the hot dogs which logically came from outer space.) PhonoStatic N°1 also contained work by Qwa Digs Under Paris's (Miekal and Liz) and a number of other pieces by pseudonyms, again because there weren't really enough submissions. Notably, both John Heck and Ralph Johnson (both members of the Tape-beatles) appear on the compilation with solo tape pieces, as well as Paul Neff himself, under the name "Smut Monkey".

Retrofuturism and the Moral Majority. The advertising for this cassette interestingly contains the first use of the word "retrofuturism", as well. We got the tapes for free by phoning Jerry Falwell's toll free number and asking for some of his sermons on tape. They really wanted a donation for them but we insisted we were poor and paying our mother's hospital bills or something like that, and they sent us a set of like 20 tapes. We used them for the first edition of the cassette. They sold for \$1.50 each.

Air Personalities. About this time, Paul Neff and I had become Djs at KRUI student radio for the University of Iowa. When we first started, KRUI was AM carrier current, which means it was "broadcast" only inside a few campus buildings, such as the dorms, by sending the signal through the wall wiring. This was not what you'd call real radio, but it was good experience. We had the good fortune, however, of sticking it out for a year after which they became a real FM station. The management of this new station was interested in specialty shows by radio "personalities". Since Paul was involved in the local band scene, he and I proposed a show devoted to hardcore, which I suggested we call "Guilt and Revenge". They accepted it and we were on from then on every Saturday night. The show is still on KRUI, but has had several Djs since we both left KRUI. As for hardcore, I can no longer stomach the stuff.

We "do" Musique-Concrète. Soon after, I was doing audio art almost as much as I was doing paste ups for PhotoStatic. I did a 15-minute piece using tv and concrète sounds in 1984-85 called "Audio Vérité", which became the name of the second PhonoStatic cassette. By this time, I was living with Ralph Johnson, who owned a reel-to-reel, so we started a tape-group called the Creature Comforts. We bought an Lp at Goodwill for 10¢ by Canadian romantic pianist Bill Butler. The insipidity of the music was oddly attractive: it was nothing in and of itself, so we concluded anything could be done with it. So we made loops of gunshots, Jerry Falwell pronouncements, loops from tv soundtracks, and the like, and used them for vocals over the smalzy piano dribblings. Some of these ("Dr. Falwell's Lament", "I Love You") were also on PhonoStatic N°2, which came out in January 1985. A proposed "corrected" version of Bill Butler's The Lover's Hour never appeared.

A Musical Mentor for the Tape-beatles. I was becoming more interested in concrete music, so I enrolled in an Electronic Music class, where I knew there would be good tape recorders. This is how I met Kenneth Gaburo, the director of the electronic music studio at the University. He is an instructor of rare energy and

keen ears for exciting work. His guidance was instrumental in the production of my 16mm film "Buz" which bears a concrete-music soundtrack. Since then, all three of the other Tape-beatles have also worked with Kenneth, and Ralph, John and I performed in December 1988 in his composition "Enough —not enough—" which will soon appear on CD. Basically we're all just intellectual pansies who don't know a good lick when we hear one.

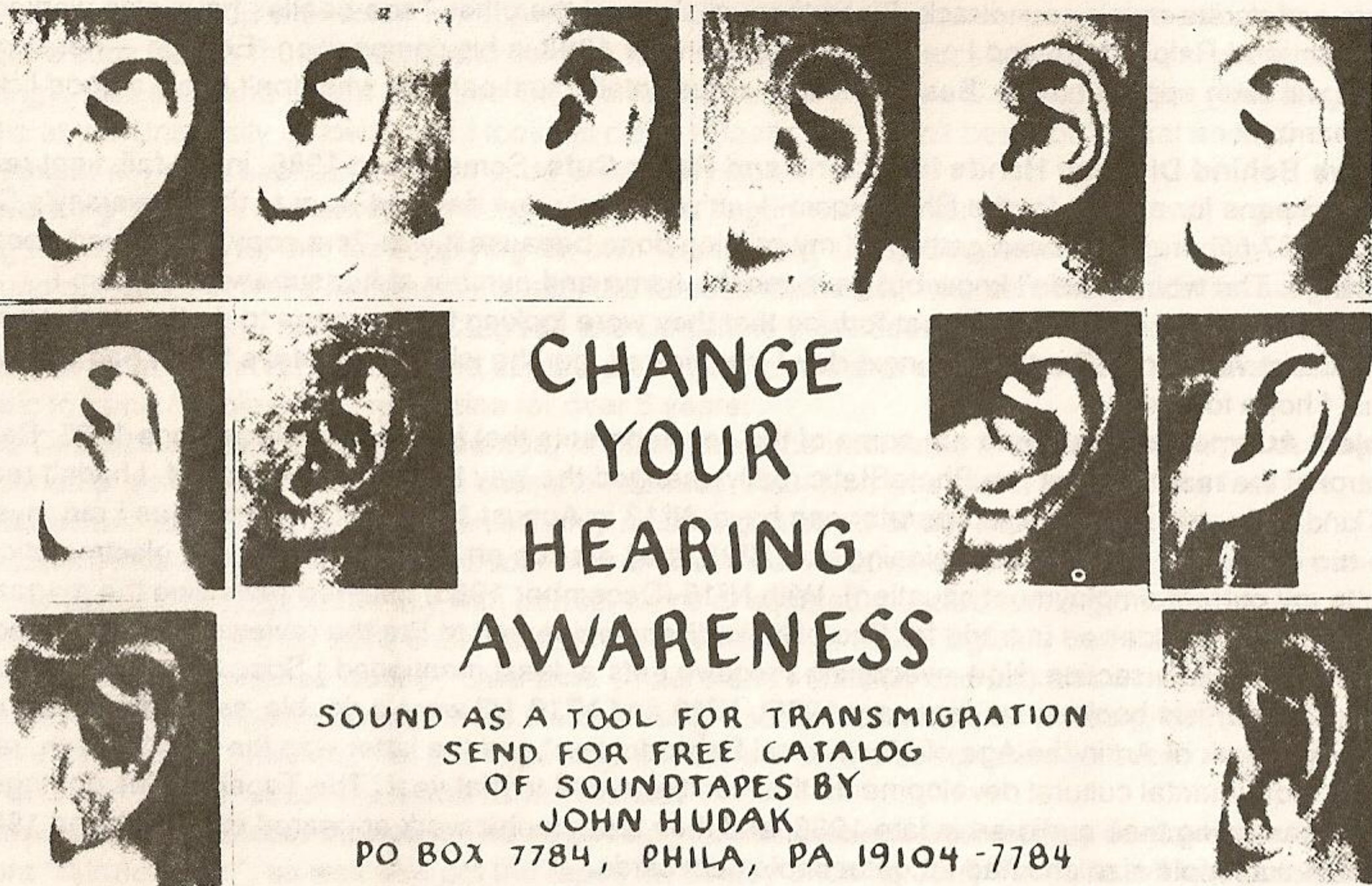
I Leave Behind Dishpan Hands for Ozone and Paper Cuts. Sometime in 1986, in the fall, I got real sick of washing pans for a living for the River Room. I left work early one day and went to the University's Copy Center N°7 (where I had been getting all my printing done because it was 2¢ a copy). I inquired about job openings. The woman didn't know but gave me the name and number of her supervisor, whom I immediately phoned. It was my great fortune that they were looking for someone to do the evening shift part-time at that very Copy Center. The next day I interviewed, got the job and two days later I had quit washing pans, I hope forever.

Project Augmentations. Here are some of the developments that have taken place since 1985: Being in control of the machine that ran PhotoStatic really changed the way the magazine looked. I hadn't realized the kind of control the machine operator can have. N°13 in August 1985 was the first issue I ran myself and I've run every one since then (beginning with N°35, they are run on an offset press with electrostatic plates, due to my current employment situation). With N°16 (December 1985) I started reviewing the magazines and booklets I'd received in trade for PhotoStatic. (People seemed to like the reviews, so I continued to expand the review section. Now everything I receive gets at least mentioned.) Soon after that I began the PhotoStatic artists book series (January 1986). N°19 and N°19 1/2 were a double issue; the former dealt with "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and the latter was the "1913" issue, reflecting on the monumental cultural developments that can be traced to that year. The Tape-beatles got together and began doing their audio-art in late 1986, and their first graphic work appeared in N°24 (June 1987). N°25/26 was triple size and had 20 detachable post cards.

More Recent Developments. N°28 saw the inclusion of Retrofuturism, a submagazine devoted to the Tape-beatles hype machine, audio art and Plagiarism®. (In 1988 the Tape-beatles applied for a Registered trademark on Plagiarism® with the U.S. Patents Office.) The acquisition of a Macintosh computer made a typeset look possible, and I became interested in running more text. A general announcement was run asking if people were interested in writing regular columns for the magazine. Thomas Wiloch, Bob Grumman, Geof Huth, Miekal And, the Information Archive, and others, have begun columns, in addition to John Heck's serialized novella "Popular Culture is the Walrus of the Avant-Garde" which applies Plagiarism® and recombinant techniques to literary and pulp texts. RadioStatic, a weekly 20-minute radio broadcast, was begun the summer of 1988, thanks to Russ Curry's "Curious Music" program. It collects and presents audio cassette work by small scale producers of interesting audio. It airs on KRUI Iowa City, WCSB Cleveland, and excerpts are aired on WFSU Tallahassee.

In the Future. VideoStatic 1989 is scheduled for imminent release, and is a video compilation along much the same lines as the PhonoStatic cassettes. HyperStatic version 1 will be available in late 1989, and will comprise a HyperCard database of networking information, detailing the histories and philosophies of whatever small publication projects I've come in contact with. There is also an idea for a DiaStatic slide archive in the works.

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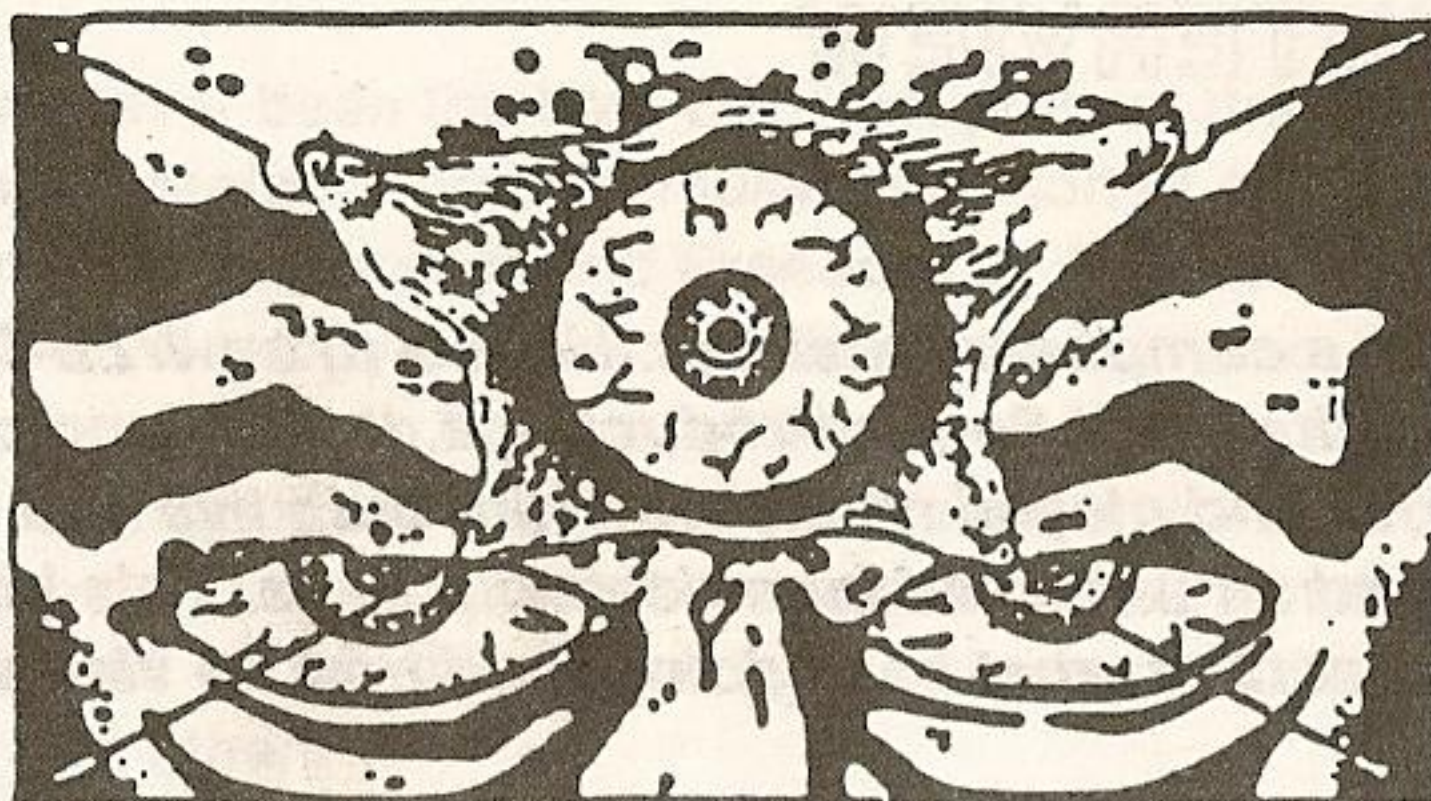
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THE DAVE PRESCOTT INTERVIEW

by Al Margolis

This interview is with Dave Prescott. He is a composer/musician. He is a dj on WZBC in Boston. He is a partner in two labels - Generations Unlimited and Pogus Productions. I'm a friend of Dave's. I've been to his house, been on his radio show, and played music with him both live and in the studio. So this is would not be necessarily considered an unbiased interview with Dave. This interview is a chance to get to speak about all three aspects of what he is doing, and how he views music (both his own and others') in the context of his life.

AL: You are a triple threat - How/why did you start playing music, being a DJ, running a label?

DAVE: I actually started playing music when I was six or seven. I had piano lessons for nine years, and was playing lots of guitar and bass in high school and college. I wound up playing in a lot of bad improv groups whose main intent was to get high. I had already been listening to the German electronic groups from Klaus Schulze to Kraftwerk for a number of years, but was unable to find anything more like this anywhere in upstate New York where I went to school. As people grew older and out of music into advertising firms and so on, I wound up playing in whatever bands I could. It was very depressing, but very lucrative: a real sociological experience with endless guitar solos and sexist lyrics. I was very interested in Electronics, but couldn't afford them, so I bought endless amounts of gadgetry and processed my electric bass within an inch of its life in improv tapes. Then I found an old Moog Prodigy one day, and essentially gave up music as the mainstream knows it.

I moved to Boston, where there are three or so excellent radio stations. In particular, **WZBC**, Boston College Radio, where I was at grad school at the time. With my collection of Electronic music I figured I could do a show, since I had music that the station didn't. It was actually easy to get a show there, and that really opened up the world, since the library there is fantastic. I found out who was making music, and how they were doing it. I asked a lot of questions, and, coincidentally, was just becoming friends with **Gen Ken Montgomery** at the time. Originally, Ken came to my place for the weekend, and I told him I was going to produce my own record to see how it would do. He suggested that we collaborate and start our own label. Ken, **Conrad Schnitzler**, and I had been discussing music for months and found that we had not only a lot in common, but particularly interesting differences which led to our each strengthening and developing our notions of music, art and life. Since then we've really developed what we do.

AL: We talked about your beginning experiments with bass weirdness, which led to your getting synths. Since a composer (hopefully) continues growing, learning, expanding, when/what did you consider your first successful tape or piece of music...When were you first happy with something you did?

DAVE: It's almost painful to think about. I bought a synth just to make newer and newer noises. I pestered myself for years about why I wasn't making good music. Owning a bass meant learning interaction and integration of ideas. Owning a synthesizer meant understanding the fundamental parameters of sound, since I didn't just want to use factory patches. Then working with tape and composition meant having to develop a whole language of my own. If only purely free composition could come with an instruction manual... I didn't know what I was looking for, but I knew what it should sound like. I would say that of my published cassettes **ELECTROMAGNETISM (A/t)** and **FACTOR X (SOP)** are the first tapes I really like, but not in the same style as my music today. These are lonely tapes of improvisations where I basically interacted with myself live because I didn't have anyone at the time to work with. You've asked a difficult question because the artist is always his own worst critic. I know people who have never been satisfied with what they've done. It gets to a point where you realize that you've done what you wanted. A piece that was truly where I was on Saturday will sound alienating on Sunday, in the same way as it's strange to hear your own words back on a tape machine.

AL: Did you find the same process hold true to being a DJ? Being a "record mogul"? When were you first

satisfied?

DAVE: Well, I've never been the best DJ, I just present the best music! Ha! There is a major dichotomy in how DJ's operate. I prefer to present music only, sort of a Rod Serling, I get out of the way after a brief intro. **Rob Olver** from **CKLN** (Toronto) and **Freedom In A Vacuum Records** is one whose radio show has been multi-axial based on ideology and the world as well as music. I simply try to erase delineations between "classes" of music - that is, to flow from Xenakis to **Minoy**. That's quite a revolution compared to dry classical jocks. I'm a good DJ because I realize my limitations (i.e. I couldn't do the sort of thing Olver has). As for running labels, I am happiest there because I work in collaboration with others whose output I am continually in awe of. It's not like second-guessing myself. I'm working with my favorite people in the world: Ken, Con, you, and others.

The only struggle I have in Radio or Records is to make sure that I am adhering to the various missions and statements of purposes - that is, to crystalize the process the best way I can, making changes when necessary. I also want a really deep voice for the radio, not the geeky one I have!

AL: What are the goals and directions for all three aspects? Are you striving for anything in particular? Do you have history in mind?

DAVE: In terms of being a DJ, I just keep presenting the music that A) I like, and B) all the other DJ's don't. I act solely to promote good music and to wipe away the delineations between genres.

In terms of my own music, I seek further articulation and clarity of my own ideas - those which I feel can be shared. Music for me is still an interaction between artist and listener, a sort of vicarious introspection or cybernetic discourse. There is no limit to the extent to which I wish to be challenged or to challenge...and this includes the instrumentation as well as the collaborations. Good music doesn't come from good instruments, it comes from good ideas.

As for the labels: We exist to promote those who have fallen through the cracks for whatever reason. Usually it is because the music exists between what is typically thought to be "academic" and "pop" oriented. The farther these labels have gone, the more it becomes apparent that this delineation simply doesn't exist. High-and-mighty academics like Kagel, Holliger and Globokar are destroying notions of music in ways far more effective than any postmodernist, deconstructionist or even industrialist! Likewise all the recent tapes by **If**, **Bwana** and others of this ilk show equal deference to academia, punk and industrial. It's not the artists who seem obsessed with one or the other, it's those that behold the differences or stand on the various soapboxes or ever-varying traditions. **John Wiggins** may be the best example of what we look for (even though I've never worked with him!). He manages to operate in cassette networking and still wins all the good computer music awards! He's a consummate technoid, but puts everything secondary to the actual music created. And to beat all, he may have the best commentary on the ridiculous separations of the camps of music: "Music is a philosophical exercise - there's no right or wrong, just lots of arguing".

GENERATIONS UNLIMITED and **POGUS** take this as a given. Historically, musical camps have been decided based on popularity and ability for self-production. H.W. Menze points out that truly successful composers are often deemed that way by the heads of institutions and their wives. Then, all too often, people wind up pigeonholed into whatever category is nearest. A recent review of Con Schnitzler in an English magazine asks "Schnitzler is not an academic, why does he sound like one?"

And so we work outside of this, but, as you mention, there is always the role of history to contend with, and isn't this one of the ultimate forces leading towards these separations of musical camps? My feeling is that history is like one's family: you will never escape it, or get a new one. If you try to run away from it, you might just wind up repeating it! History is tyranny, there is no doubt. If one sees one's self as the next brush stroke in the history of art, I think that this is as limiting as the forms that so many seek to destroy. Even the various acts of "destroying" the past makes one as much a slave to it as those who bow to it. Kathy Acker has recently pointed out that in literature 10 years ago the only way to get around the norms was to destroy the language through whatever means are available. Now, she continues, the best thing to do is to write what is deliberately against the rules.

I think the best approach is to study the history of musics, whether it be since Debussy or Russolo, and



Left To Right: Serge Leroy (Badlands CD's), Prescott, GIII, Conrad Schnitzler



Prescott with Romanian composer Iancu Dumitrescu (left)

THEN figure a position in relation to it. For me, clearness and development of originality is the most important thing in the world, and there are many lessons to be learned in the history in order to get beyond that same history. It's a real paradox. But to view one's self as a part of history (with the arrogance that this implies) is the quickest path to the pretentiousness cemetery. Why bother? Like so many, I've gotten my best ideas from other media. Guys like Paul Klee, or Miro, Beuys and you-name-it... To develop a line like them (on paper) has simply not been done in music.

AL: GENERATIONS UNLIMITED has a specific path it follows. Could you state it and the reasons underlying it?. Also, how are things divided up amongst the partners?

DAVE: Yes, getting back to the statement of the purpose: We want to produce the parallel histories and parallel futures, to show that the future of electronics is not NEW AGE (which is already dead on the vine any way) and that HISTORY of music is not merely Cologne, Paris, Darmstadt or Milan. The way to discontinue the tyrannical grip of history is to understand and work beyond it, and these are the artists we produce.

GENERATIONS UNLIMITED seeks to promote these artists who have truly developed their own syntax, their own highly individual self-styled self-expression, with an emphasis on expression. In spite of the the electronic nature of our releases, instrumentation is not the issue. We've worked with both Rutman and Morphogenesis, but find that most of the people who fit this bill are working with tape and electronics (hence the phrase "dramatic electronic music series"), and not necessarily purely.

The other factor is how we work is to promote artists who can't get published elsewhere. Here we have another paradox: We are looking for the alternatives - the folks who REALLY don't have it easy. We have produced people from so far from the Iron Curtain that they don't have a Western history to rebel against. One guy is in a wheelchair and is sufficiently destitute that he can't produce himself. Another couple are older guys who have been scorned in their attempts to the point where, in their sixties, they are just plain alienated. Our one exception is Rick Franecki from F/I, but this is because he refuses to release his solo material!

Workwise, it's really easy! Ken and I each do what the other can't. Ken is an expert in presenting visual art, and so he has the run of all the ads, album covers, artwork, and whatever. That includes farming it out. **Arcane Device's David Myers** was the one who designed the logo with Ken. Ken's brilliance at those things simple and efficient amazes me. On the other hand, I like to write letters and talk on the phone. I like to make packages and send them to people, so I'm the perfect person to do the brass tacks of this operation. While Ken is an expert at face-to-face schmoozing (at his **GENERATOR** gallery), I like to hide in my flat and communicate from a distance (which is why Boston is perfect for me). Most things from **GENERATIONS UNLIMITED** come out of my flat, but Ken and Con not only help in terms of visual aesthetics, but it is the endless dialogue on art within this "triangle" that keeps the development cohesive. Working as a threesome helps to cancel out dead-end ideas, which are a natural part of the process.

AL: Has your outlook changed since you first got involved in doing these things? Or hasn't it? Has it expanded or contracted, or just become more focused? What are your realistic visions of all this stuff - Are you going to be able to make a living at this and do you want to?

DAVE: My outlook has definitely changed. While I do not negate any of the music I or others have done in the past, I have realized what an incredible time we live in: never before has the means to music production been so democratic, and yet distributive systems, and all too often the audience, remain reactionary. So many people feel that "great art" is in the hands of an experienced and lucky few. Art remains an elusive mystery to so many, and yet possible for so many more. I was brought up with this "Beatlemania paradigm", and it has taken a long, long time to realize that one's amount of recognition simply isn't important. Recognition is not a function of art, but of hype. Zorn and Sharp have cornered New York because of their incessant hype, and the belief of a couple of record companies (mostly in West Berlin!!!). Froese and Tangerine Dream have their reputation because of a few years of experimentation followed by shrewd judgement of soundtrack trends. Froese even has the heart condition to prove it.

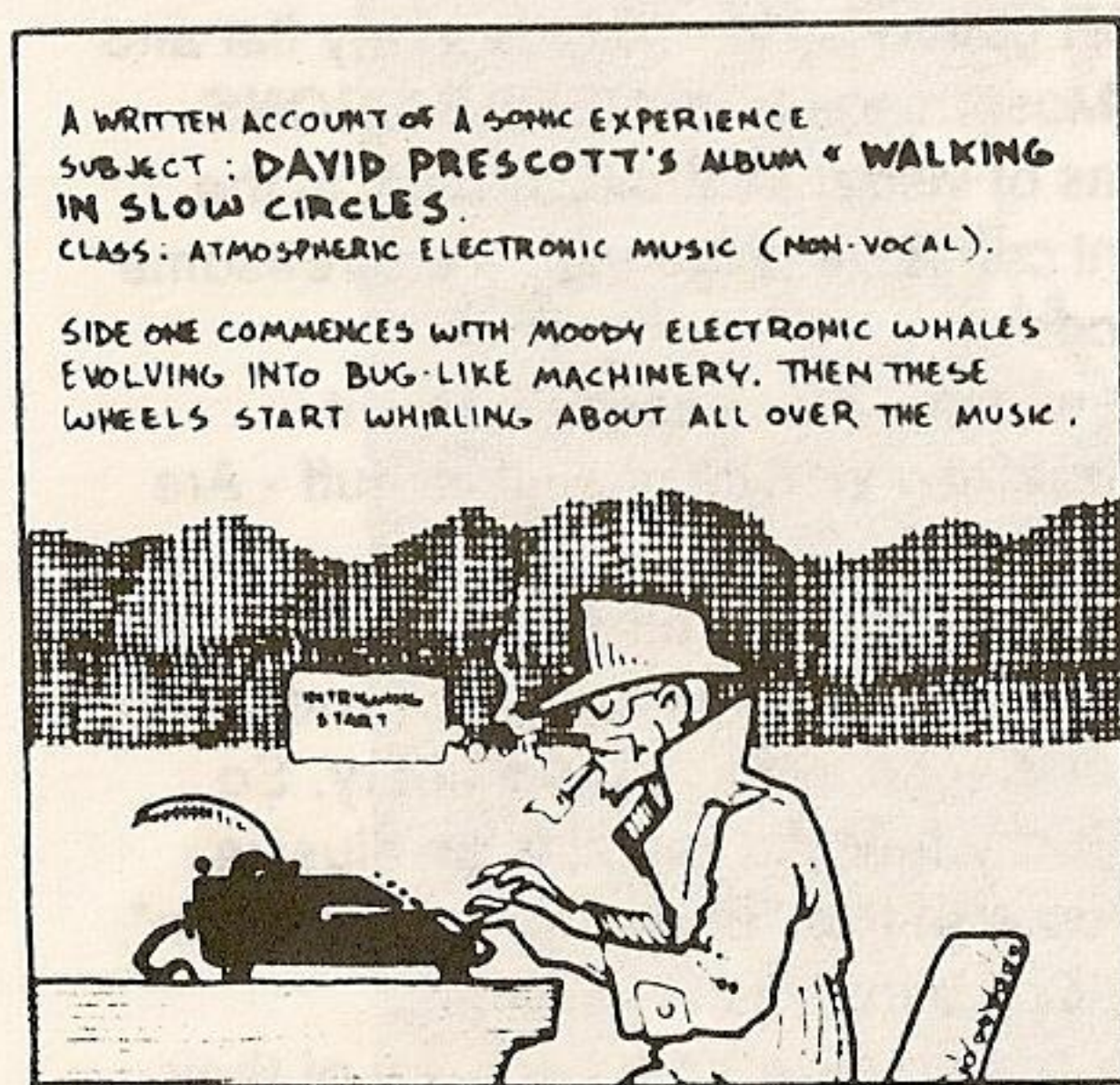
My outlook is not an acceptance, but a welcoming of the fact that ART IS NO MYSTERY ANYMORE. The

real Mystery is mankind. Art in 1990 has been millions of people networking and attempting to be heard, without competition. By using advertising and radio, **GENERATIONS UNLIMITED** uses outmoded means to point to the democratic inevitability of atonal marching band music for everybody. The losers in this all are the ones who wish to be famous, and those collectors who obsessively try to track every movement of "great" musicians, and wind up projecting their own definitions of art onto the music that they attempt to pigeonhole and index. In this way, I feel that **GENERATIONS UNLIMITED** and the associated projects are far more focused through their selectiveness, but in doing so are welcoming more and more musics. The last \$1,100 I have spent on musical instruments have not been on electronic instruments...

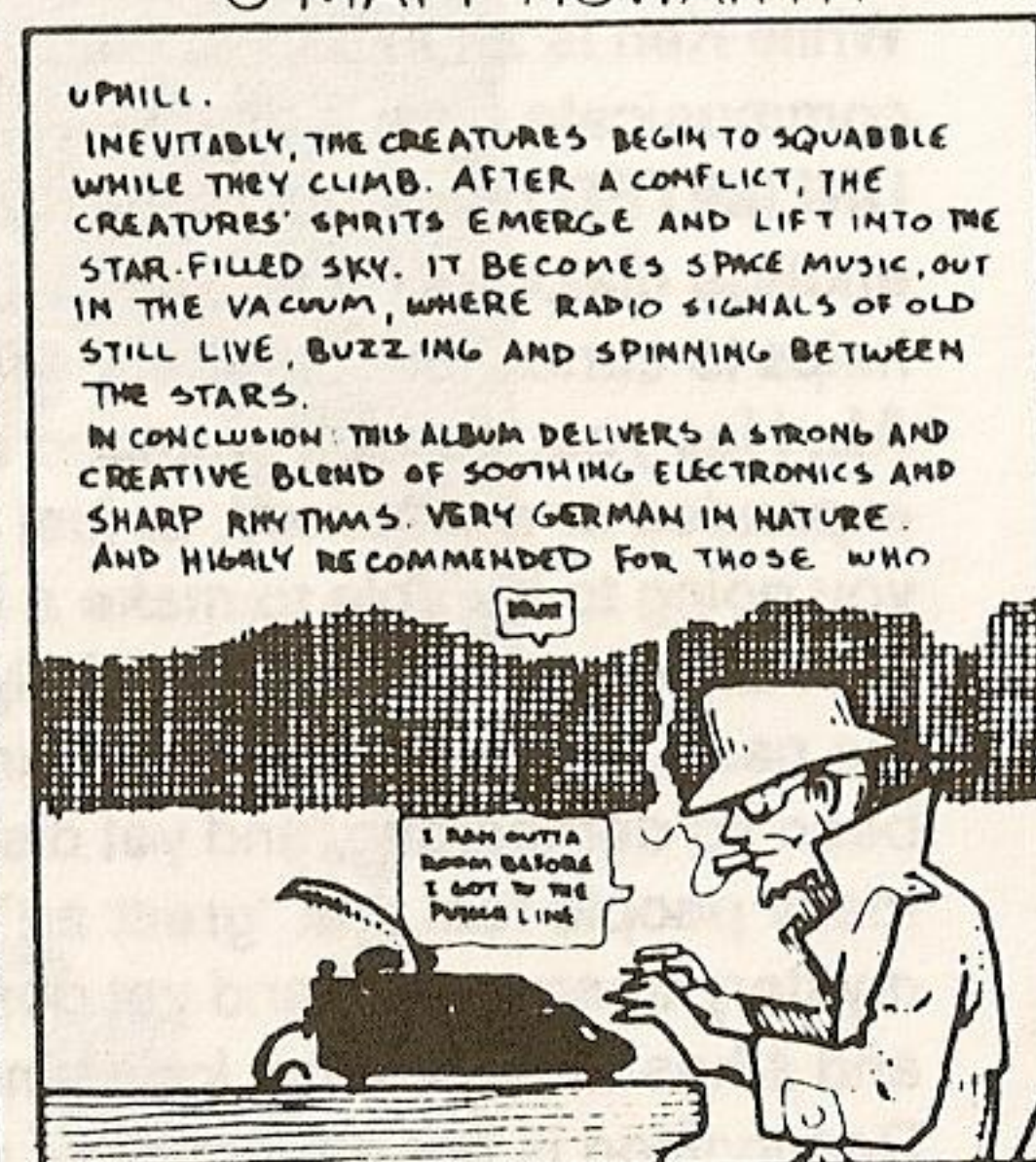
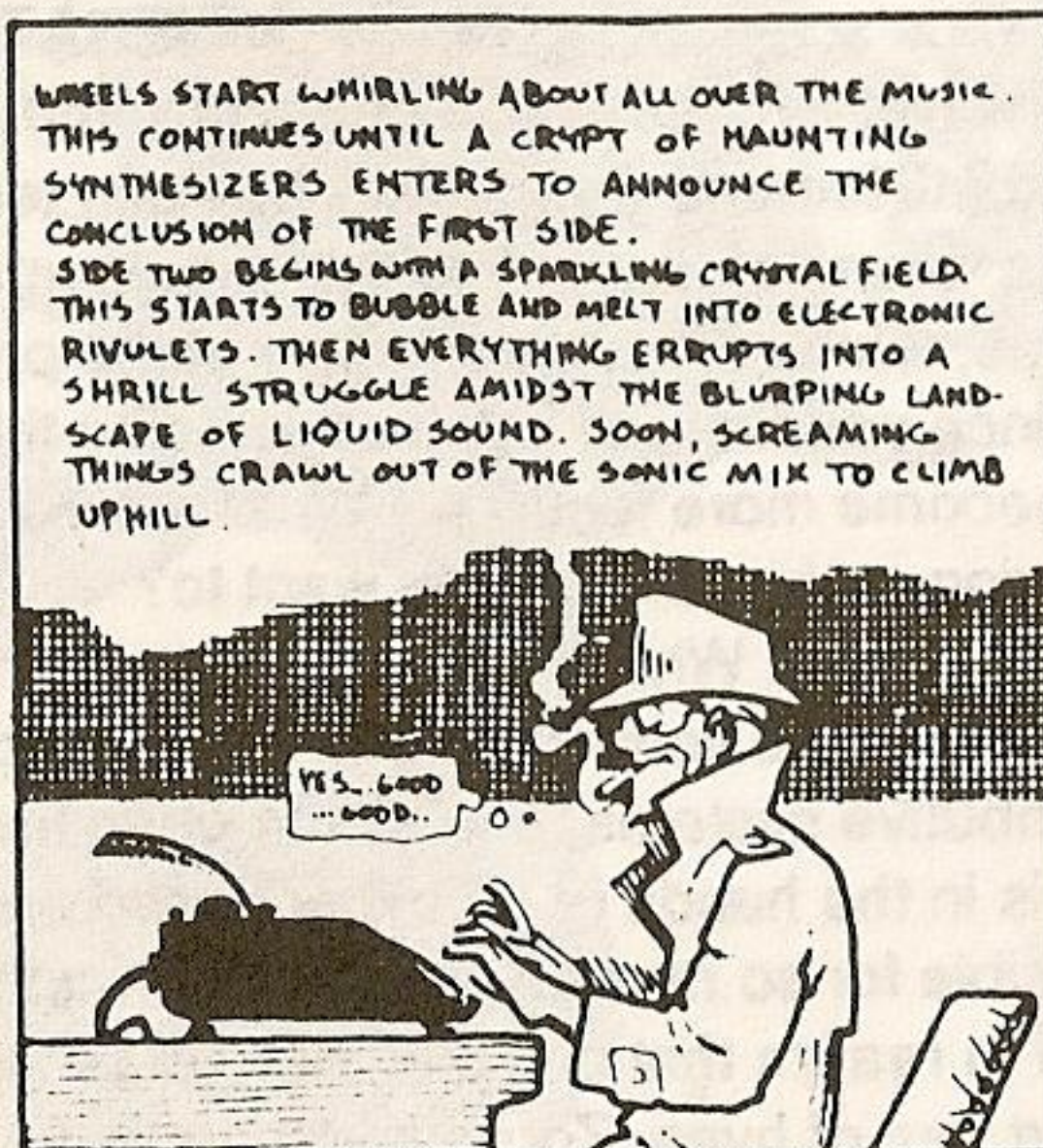
My vision of this stuff: I honestly don't know. **GENERATIONS UNLIMITED** is doing pretty well - we have some money, but that will change soon enough! I see myself as keeping my day job because it gives me more money to throw into the fire!!! Ken and I have an excellent relationship, one which is extremely important to me. I think the best thing we could do is continue. You ask about this being a living and do I want to? Here again, I actually prefer to keep the issue moot for now: I have enough time to do both...and to be honest, I like having the extra income to throw at the label. The more money we have the more ideas we get, and the ultimate commodity becomes time! I work 6 to 7 days a week as a psychotherapist at a school west of Boston, and I absolutely love the job and the kids, so what I really want is to become more efficient with my time! However, the underlying problem is: My music is based 50% of the time on meditation and 50% of the time on gigantic struggle. I need my job to continually keep a fire under my ass. My job is the inspiration. The pieces "*Enmeshment*" and "*Walking In Slow Circles*" were both about the families that I've worked with, always stuck in the same groove (no pun intended). So for the moment, I like things just the way they are. I wouldn't change a thing, except I wish I had a nicer apartment!

For those of you who don't know it yet, both Dave Prescott's Generations Unlimited and Al Margolis' Sound Of Pig Music have new addresses. The new address for Generations Unlimited is P.O. Box 540, Marlborough, MA 01752. Sound Of Pig's new address is P.O. Box 150022, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, NY 11215-0001. Also, GU and SOP have joined forces to form a new record company called POGUS PRODUCTIONS. Their first two releases are ROBERT RUTMAN: 1939 and MORPHOGENESIS: PROCHRONISMS. POGUS contact address is 151 First Ave. #201, New York, NY 10003.

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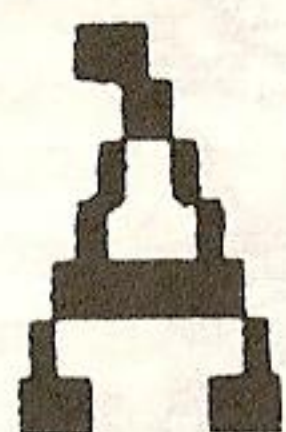
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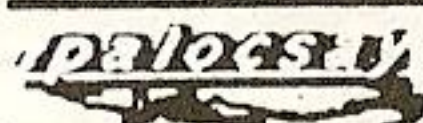
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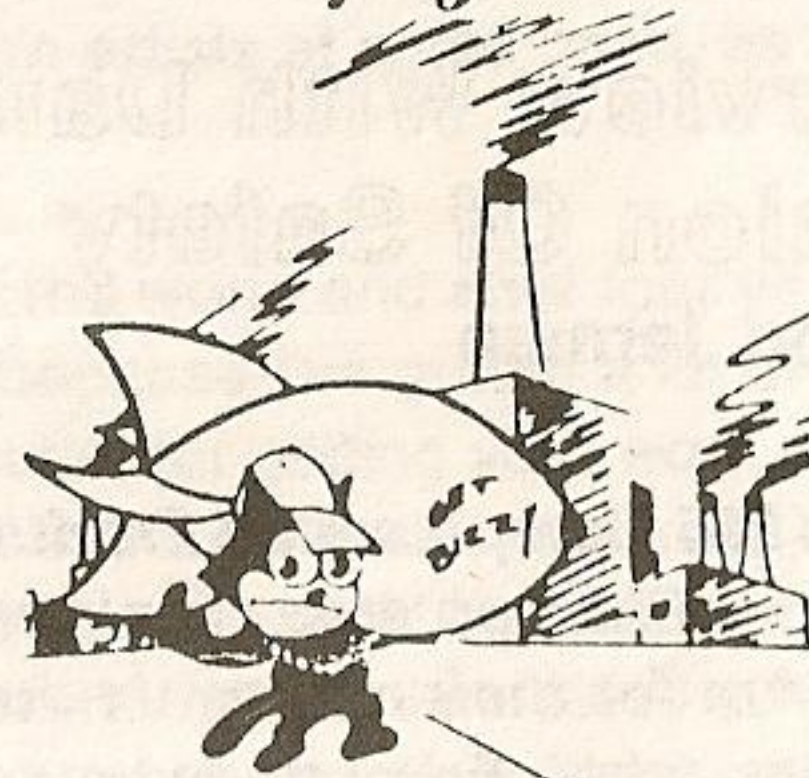
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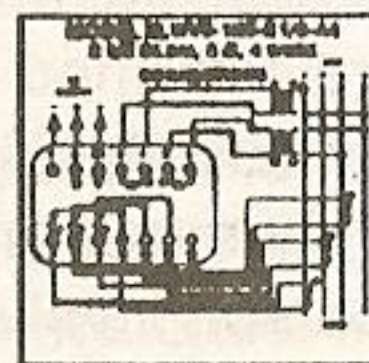


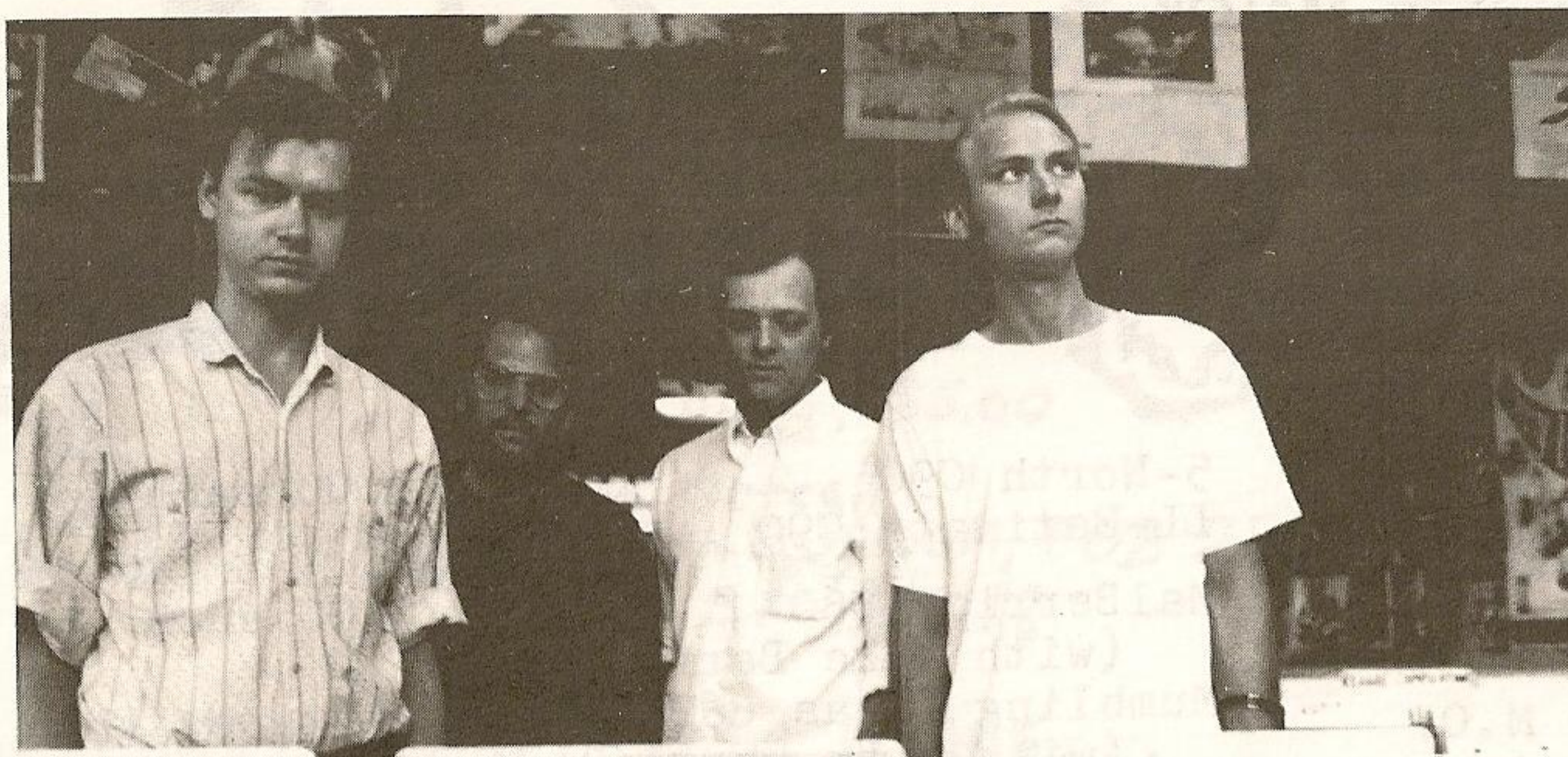
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Interview With Dan Burke Of Complacency Productions/ Illusion Of Safety

by Jeph Jerman

Since 1986 Complacency Productions has been a clearing house for some of the best music to come out of the Chicago area. Their projects are immaculately recorded with packaging that could give CBS a run for their money. In July of 1989 I spoke with Dan Burke, co-founder of Complacency, about the label. Eric Lunde was also present, and some of his comments have been included.

J: So how did the label start, briefly?

D: In 1986 I had finished my first cassette and was living with Thymme Jones, who was one of the original members of IOS. He was working on his cassette and instead of just putting them out of our house, he said we should get a label together. So we brainstormed and came up with the name, went to Palatine and got a P.O. Box, and that's basically it. As far as how the label works, it's basically a co-op. We each do our own work, produce our own projects, and put them out and promote them ourselves. The label's basically a name with a very vague ideal. Another person involved is Chris Block, who's in Thymme's group Cheer Accident, and also has his own projects Block and Girl Thirteen. The three of us are kind of Complacency. If anyone submits anything to be on the label, it has to go through the three of us before it's approved. It's kind

of incestuous, but at the moment there are very few other artists on the label besides the projects that we're involved in.

J: So if anybody wanted you to put something out should they just send it to you?

D: Yeah, we're always open. I don't know what we could do for anybody, but we're open to having other things on the label... Right now I'm producing the Hands To/Eric Lunde split LP.

J: How does Complacency do as a business?

D: Fair. Cassettes are really hard, nobody wants 'em. There's so many cassettes flooding the marketplace no one's really interested in even listening to them, even if they're packaged well. No one wants to hear 'em so you kinda have to put out an LP for anyone to take notice. At this point we're starting to sell some cassettes. I probably give away approximately 10-20 of each cassette release to friends, radio stations, publications, distributors for promo... records about 50 promo. The IOS first LP has sold 1000, at least, I only have 100 left out of 1100... I don't know how many sit unsold in stores or on distributor's shelves. Since the LP I have picked up good cassette distribution in Europe. Of the 10 tapes IOS has released so far, I haven't kept track except for the new ones. There are 120 "IN 70 COUNTRIES" out there, 110 "FIFTEEN". For the other bands tape sales are much less as they don't write/correspond as much and don't have cassette distribution. I think at this point Industrial music is easier to market because there are less people doing quality sound work, whereas there are a lot of rock groups and others doing various forms of real music. Cheer Accident have probably sold about 600 of their LP already.

J: Do you think that doing things this way (home taping, indie labels, etc...) is a viable alternative?

D: Of course. What else can one do without the support of the mainstream? We need an outlet, a means of expression, and feedback.

J: Do you think the independents have much of an impact? Will they ever?

D: Impact on what? The underground? In general no, it's small and will remain so. If anything the fact that there is so much independent music actually hurts people's chances of reaching a larger audience, because distributors can only handle so much and it's hard to get attention. Especially with cassettes because there are just too many and a lot of them are 'bad'.

J: What do you think of CD's? Any plans to release IOS or other Complacency product on CD?

D: Another marketing scam. But they do sound good (clean) and will last longer than vinyl or tape. I personally will not be purchasing any. IOS will appear on a compilation CD from Germany (Franz Liebl) of experimental Chicago artists. Complacency may do a compilation of our own artists at some point, as many radio stations play CD's extensively.

J: Do you ever trade records or cassettes?

D: I used to trade a lot. I've traded with probably sixty-some people around the world and after four years of doing that I'm pretty tired of doing it. I guess I'm missing some good work, because I've gotten a lot of great stuff through trading and made a lot of great friends. It's definitely a good outlet for getting your work out there and seeing what other people are doing, but when you get back work that's dubbed onto cheap cassettes, a cheap cover, it sounds like the music was made in one night with no thought behind it, you get tired of getting that. All my tapes are on chrome tape; I have color xerox covers that are laminated... I take a lot of time and effort with each release and each piece of music. None of the other people on the label have ever traded. I'm glad I did because it's made me a lot of friends and got me a lot of contacts, but at this point... I don't like getting tapes in the mail from people expecting me to send a tape in return without inquiring first. I guess it's pretty arbitrary who I'm gonna trade with, if I think their work looks interesting or sounds interesting I might do it, but in general I don't trade any more, for that reason.

J: What do you think of reviews?

D: They're usually a bunch of bullshit, even the positive ones. All of our reviews except one in LOWLIFE... LOWLIFE was the only negative review we've ever gotten, and I liked that one a lot. The guy wasn't far off the mark at all, what he was saying about us. All the positive ones, they're just kinda funny... I don't know how to explain it... but the way they... personal insight... it's all so subjective. I like straightforward reviews that describe the music and what's going on, not the critic's interpretation of what he thinks is going on or

where the band is gonna go, or what they're all about when he really doesn't know. You don't see enough of those straightforward kinda reviews. They're just too subjective and too superficial. I've never heard from any of the reviewers, they'll rave about the work and then you wonder if they're interested in hearing any of your other work. As far as where it gets you, it's good to have exposure, we sell anywhere from 5-10 cassettes from a review in some of the larger magazines. I suppose the repeated exposure of your name in front of people is good... so we keep sending them off.

J: Do you think there's a better way to gain exposure?

D: Radio, and of course all there is is college, and you've gotta try and find the college stations that has programmers interested in extremely underground music. Most college stations are into the garage/thrash or REM type of thing, so you really need to search out and find the right stations. There are a few really great ones out there that are very supportive of home tapers or very underground or Industrial music, but you've gotta find 'em. They usually don't put out playlists with that kind of music on them, so you've got to do some searching and writing, but that's pretty valuable, radio support. It's also nice to have people in record stores or at distributorships who are familiar with your work and like it enough to push it, because distributors are so overwhelmed right now with independent music. Even if you have an album it's not real easy because there's just so much out there, you really need someone who's gonna get behind the work and mention it to people... So if you've got all three of those things on your side you're pretty lucky. Good reviews and some distribution and some radio.

J: Do you play live a lot?

D: We play occasionally, IOS maybe once every two months. We've done a couple of small tours, went to Pittsburgh, last year we did three shows in Colorado. This year we went out to Colorado for one show in Denver, then out to San Francisco for two live shows and two radio shows. Cheer Accident has been playing Chicago now for about a year. They play out once every few months and they're starting to get a little more recognition. Girl Thirteen has played live twice. Due to the fact that one of their members goes to school in southern Illinois they don't get to practice much or play out live very often.

J: I've noticed that IOS shows don't always have the same personnel. Are there any rules you use to decide who is going to play where, or is it just spur of the moment?

D: It's pretty arbitrary. I work with seven or eight different people. For a while I was working with three people, Mitch Enderle, Mark Sorensen and Mark Klein as the main core. We were sort of composing together and doing most of the shows as the most core, but Mark S moved to San Francisco so now I'm doing formation at every show. It keeps things varied and interesting for everybody concerned, me, them, and the audience, but it's pretty arbitrary who does the shows with me, whoever's available...or if somebody hasn't been involved for a while I'll ask that person, or if I'm trying to achieve a different thing. The last show we did in Chicago was Mitch and myself as a duo, and he was the original person I started doing this music with. The original IOS was DOT DOT DOT and myself. They were a progressive rock band and I kind of loosened them up. They would do really out of the ordinary things with me involved, it was my first year of fooling around with any instruments. Then I started working with Mitch, and we were into the same kind of music, whereas DOT DOT DOT was a progressive band and into progressive rock and such. Mitch and I were into Industrial. I like his sound.

I've got a sampler now so my stuff's getting a little cleaner, and some strings. Mitch is using an analog, old Moog synthesizer, and he tends to be a bit harsher. I think that's an interesting mix working with Mitch...he's got kind of a harsh analog sound and I'm using digital equipment and some sweeter type sounds.

J: Have you released any stuff of folks other than members of Complacency?

D: We've only released two other things besides music from Thymme and Chris and myself. A solo cassette by Jim O' Rourke called *REMOVE THE NEED*. He used to be in a group called the Elvis Messiahs and they have a number of cassettes on SOP. Jim's a composition major at DePaul University here. Very talented. He does guitar improvisation that's been described as what Fred Frith might sound like if produced by Brian Eno. That's a little pretentious but it does come close. It's very good, very tasteful stuff. We've released him and another project called Currier and Ives, a project of Ross Feller. He used to be a member of DOT DOT

DOT. That's about it. We've gotten a few submissions we didn't think were good enough. I suppose it's just a matter of sensibilities, and some people's are wider than others. I've gotten a lot of music in trade that should've never been released. It's fine to do on your own for fun, but...people tend to be very self-indulgent and not critical enough of themselves and what they're releasing. I mean it's ok to fool around at home and do whatever you wanna do. It's almost embarrassing some of the stuff that's put out. That's one of the things that we at Complacency pride ourselves in is that there's an attention to detail in the packaging and quality of the music we release.

J: What motivated you to do sound work?

D: Probably one of the biggest reasons I'm doing this is from seeing Throbbing Gristle twice, their last two shows in the States really impressed me. The kinds of sounds and information they were playing with...no one's ever done it quite like that before and it was quite impressive to see it and be a part of it, and that was my major motivation for getting involved in doing sound work. All of us have a certain amount of creativity and probably the easiest way for us to express it is sonically. A couple of the other people that I work with are visual artists, photographers, video artists, but music is pretty immediate and pretty far-reaching...you can reach a lot of people with it. But basically we do music for ourselves, the kind of sounds and structures we want to hear...and I suppose there's a certain amount of wanting some recognition, respect...that's Eric's point...

E: What makes it bad is that if you do it on your own it looks like kind of like a hobbyist activity. There's so many people putting out so much trash that it might as well be a hobbyist activity.

D: For them it is. For me it's not. I've been devoting 20, 25 hours a week easily to my endeavors. I go home and I work on it...I do fliers, I send stuff out, correspondence, packaging, recording...the last few years I've spent a lot of time weekly. Sometimes I feel funny because people look at me like "Oh he's trying to make money on the music...". Well I am...I don't like my job, I'd rather not work in food service any more. I put a lot of time and energy into IOS, and I'd like to make some money on it. I don't want to give the music away, I think it should be supported...and the bad thing about it is, everybody's making music now...so people don't wanna buy your stuff, they want to trade for it...and that's fine, that's fun, but...

E: I've just decided now that making money is a moot point. It's the bottom line, it's part of life, it's the way you live, y'know? If you're gonna do what you want, you're gonna have to do it (make money) in order to live...It's the way things are. I mean any moron who's like "O yer just after the money...". That's a foolish statement, y'know... "I'm just doin' it for the money, for the exposure, the publicity or the attention...".

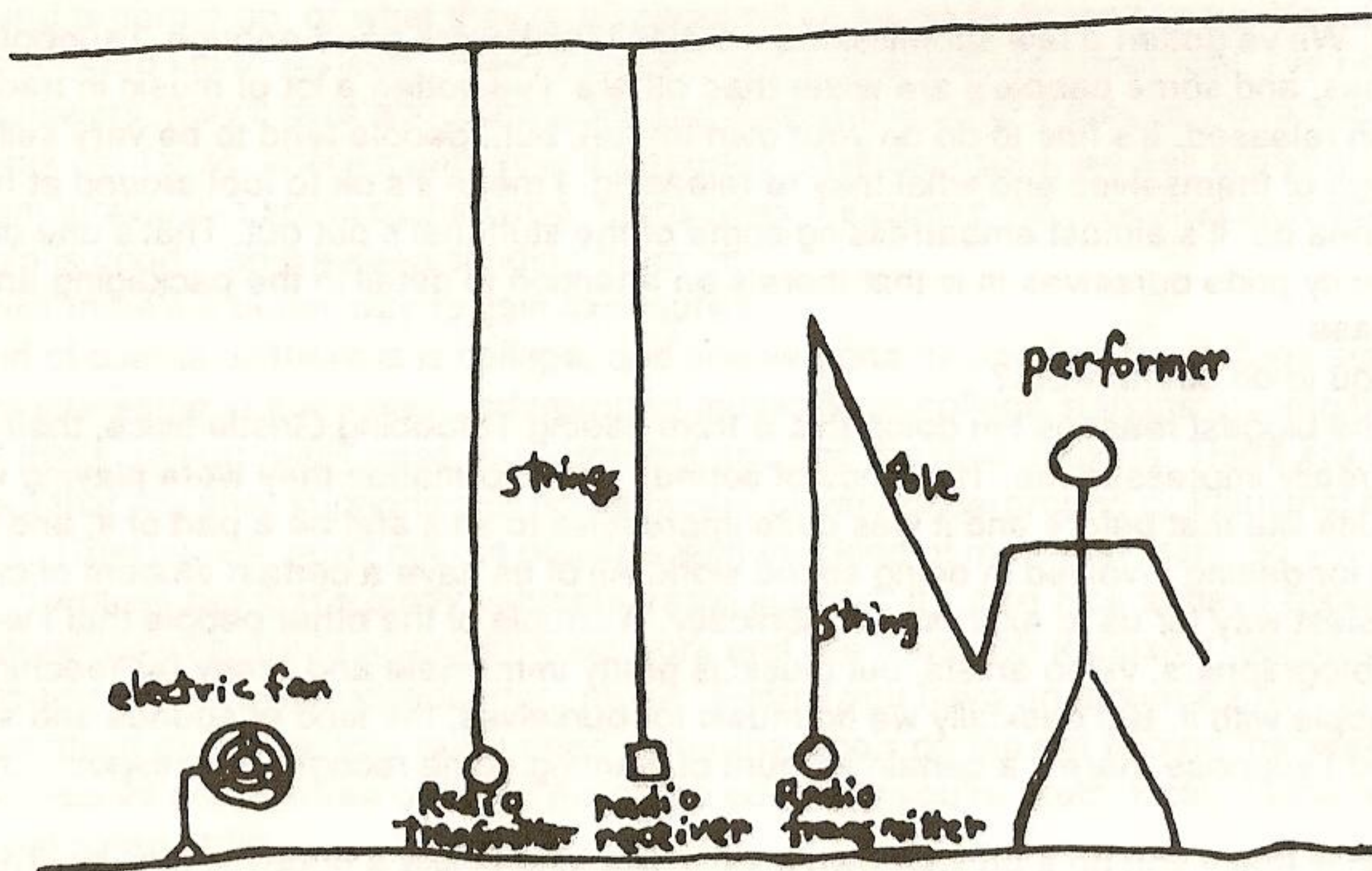
D: There's a lot more to it than that...

E: Fuckin' right! I do it because I want to do it. I do it because I have the urge to do it. I do it because, it's what I am, it's what I do, and the money part is secondary...I mean I'd prefer no one had money, but you can't go around and say "You sold out, yer makin' money, how can you be of vital interest any more if yer makin' money?". And Christ, none of us are making money. To just switch and endeavor to make some money is where these people have a problem. And I have a problem with it because I don't see why I have to switch endeavors to do it. I don't engage in that argument any more, it's counter to reason and it's an illogical argument, it doesn't make any sense, it has no impact, no gearing on what you're doing...whether you're making money, whether you've gone pop...

D: Does for some people...

E: And those people are the people that should basically piss off, because how can you put up with that? Just say "Look, watch the record, the record will prove itself", as they like to say. Am I going to sit around when I'm 50 years old and say "I'm glad, I'm fucking happy I never sold out..."? That's bullshit, that's complete bullshit. You gotta do something with it. That's life...that's the course of life...

ADDENDA: For those wishing to trade tapes or records of Complacency projects, IOS' newest member Jim O'Rourke is an avid trader. He can be reached at 4721 N. Odell, Harwood Heights, IL 60656. Complacency has recently released two new split albums, one by Eric Lunde/Hands To and one by Illusion Of Safety/Holeist (a joint project of sound work from Lunde, Burke and Jerman). Contact Complacency at P.O. Box 1452, Palatine, IL 60078.



special movements make
"music"

Catch-wave, 1967

— T. Kosugi

FISHING FOR SOUND

An Interview with Improvisational musician/sound installation artist Takehisa Kosugi
by John Hudak

Takehisa Kosugi is an improvisational musician who composes and performs structured improvisations using various instruments and non-instruments, and also constructs ingenious self-interactive sound installations for various international art galleries and shows. His performances with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company have been comical and amusing in both sight and sound, sometimes causing distress to some audience members who perceive the work as a distraction to the dance. Previous to his permanently joining the Cunningham Dance Company in 1976, he was a member of the "Taj Mahal Travellers", an electro-acoustic/multi-media improvisational group that performed in many different environments including the beach, snowy mountains and even Taj Mahal. His first job after graduating college was working with the sound effects team for the Japanese cartoon "Astroboy".

Takehisa Kosugi (K) John Hudak (H)

H: Tell me about working with the sound effects for Astroboy. Was that your first workings in music?

K: I studied music history and musicology at the Tokyo University of the Arts, going in two directions: one

was improvisational music, and the other one was "objects of sound"...sounds other than the melody/rhythm oriented music...every sound including music. It is called "sound objects" for me. For the tape music of Astroboy, I joined in this part of the sound effects of film, and in this case, I worked with creating "sound objects", not with a conventional musical approach; for instance, Astroboy walking...

H: Like a squeaky sound...

K: This is the effect of walking, but for me this is also a type of "sound object". We can use this sound independently from the film. At that time, I was assisting a sound effects team, and there were several people working together to create this type of sound effect in one week to complete a 20-minute film, so we worked with electronic sound generators...

H: Synthesizers...

K: At that time in the 60's we didn't have high-tech music synthesizers, we used a sine wave generator and a square wave generator to get a variety of electronic sounds and we also manipulated the tape recorders overdubbing and half speed or high speed of tape running and we also played the recorded tape by hand...without the movement of the motor...and then we could make very unusual sounds, and I think the walking of Astroboy, the sound of walking..."peyup, peyup, peyup"...it wasn't my idea, but one of the artists working there got them. I think I remember that they came from previously recorded marimba sounds..."bom, bom, bom", then they were played by hand on a tape recorder (both hands on the reels moving back and forth without using the motor) and tape delay echo was added to it...so this is how to make the original sound of Astroboy walking. For making these types of "sound objects", we did a lot of chance performances...an improvisational approach to creating this type of "sound object" so the "sound object".

H: What does improvisation mean for you?

K: Improvisation for me is not like orthodox traditional improvisation like Indian music or jazz. Although these types of music are essentially improvised, they must be based on conventional tonal systems, and my approach to improvising is very much out of tonal systems; for instance, if I play violin, and I play melody, I play the melody as a "sound object"...a kind of compound sound with a system of randomness, so I can create quite unexpected sounds with my instrument. In the beginning I did very free improvisation with friends of mine, sometimes four, five, six people together, and at that time we said the music was played by the automatic method, automatism, like the action painting of Jackson Pollock...this is kind of by chance, the paintings were by chance, dropping the paint by action, not so much controlled by the hand. My music is not so consciously controlled by hand. Sometimes I need to make my movement of playing the instruments quite random and this is part of the automatism of the music, automatic.

H: So you mean the thinking about it is not connected to the hands?

K: My music performance is of course connected to the hands, and to certain patterns of movements of sound, but when it's played, the patterns change instantaneously. At the moment of creating a sound the performer gets a very instantaneous approach at the same occurrence/events of sound. It's not predetermined for my hand movements.

H: So you are making the choices at the moment you are playing?

K: Yes, it's just composed of this type of action, apart from ordinary conscious actions, something like automatic writing in literature.

H: Automatic writing was where you wouldn't directly be thinking about what you were doing and the writing would come directly out of the unconscious...

K: Well, this very moment, when it comes up, I just get it, grasp it, I recognize it, so music is coming from somewhere, not from me, but from outside myself.

H: Do you make a choice as to whether it's good or bad, or does it just come?

K: It just comes, but this is a very instantaneous event, very very very instantaneous, so my reaction should also be very instantaneous. This is an essential part of improvisation. So I think this is not like measuring time, in the ordinary time scale, or conscious scale...It would be related to the consciousness of the performer. So in this case, sometimes time stays there, doesn't continue. This is strange to say, but in my consciousness, when I play, music sometimes stops and I just play spacially or timelessly. The performer

does not feel time. The performer can stay at this stage, without time consciousness.

H: In the present moment...right now...so when you make a sound you are in the moment making it spontaneously, you don't think about what happened before and what you think might sound good next?

K: Automatic performance...I say it's random, but it's not totally random like scattering sounds...like collecting many different sounds and mixing together randomly. This is really purely random. Certainly we have controlling, but also...it's difficult to explain...it's like I have a different type of consciousness. I feel it's like we have a vaster consciousness and move out. So we don't have any certain created timing figure of sound, we have a lot of distance. At the moment of the performance we go from distance to distance and moving around. I have a piece called "Tender Music". One man manipulates some object, keeping a distance between the object and himself. At that time, I manipulated the objects with strings...attached strings to the objects and I manipulated them.

H: Picked them up?

K: Well, not exactly picked them up...as the instructions go..."to manipulate them through six different actions: 1) tip over, 2) tip back, 3) slant, 4) slant back, 5) tip over the slanted one, and 6) slant the tipped one over." The important thing is that this is different from my performance with ordinary musical instruments, but the structure relates to my other musical performances.

H: Although the objects made sounds too...

K: Yes, sounds too, but if it doesn't have sound that's ok too, but automatically this has sound, but this is not sound-oriented music, this action is a kind of total performance. It's not dance, but people who like action will appreciate watching it and sometimes listening to the occasional sound. This is not only sound nor action oriented, it's a combination of sound and action together.

H: And visual...multi-media.

K: Even if it's an empty Coca Cola bottle...for this piece it's also related to improvisation...the automatic from the consciousness...using these strings, or any material...if we use these chopsticks to manipulate with, well this could be with string or chopsticks, but without direct manipulation by hand.

H: You lose control slightly.

K: I lose control, and this is very important to use these media.

H: It makes it somewhat random or influenced by chance...

K: Yes. This is my sense of improvisation. This is a very good example of indirectness. It's not so easy to control an object with string or chopsticks. It is easy to play a tea container with direct hand operation, but we have to find a way to make it unusual. Then we need some instruction...we need choreography. But using chopsticks is already unusual...we can find a new phase of this...time and space event. So this is another direction of my approach to making music.

H: As time has gone along, have your ideas about sound clarified/changed directions? Could you explain your melodious music?

K: I've certainly changed my style of improvisation. At the beginning when I started improvisation, my sound was very atonal, not melodious. Early on I listened to the European avant-garde music, so I had a certain influence from this type of sound, and also "sound objects", not only for the noise sounds. Then later when I played with the Taj Mahal Travellers, my music became very melodious, something like Indian music, a little blues melody.

H: Would you say pretty? Like songs?

K: I combined with other performers and electronic sound devices including echo machines, filters, and electronic sound generators. That time I had a concert called "Catch Wave/Catching Wave". Wave means audio wave as well as supersonic or light wave. I had an electronic sound system, a very simple one...combination of radio transmitter and receiver. The radio wave is not an audio wave, but when they meet together in an electronic circuit, a beating sound occurs. One radio frequency and another radio frequency, if they are tuned very close to each other, the difference between each frequency/radio signal became an audio signal...called heterodyne. So I found this phenomena when I was testing a radio transmitter - a very cheap wireless guitar transmitter over the AM radio. When I put this transmitter close to

the radio receiver, I got this beat signal/audio signal...and this phenomenon is so beautiful, and if the position is changed, the beat is also changed, so I put these materials, the receiver and the transmitter, actually suspended them with string from the ceiling, sometimes a tiny transistor radio here and about seven inches apart from the transmitter, both hung together from the ceiling or from a suspension, the suspensions have three movements by air current, so this is one of my approaches to mixed media. This air movement creates this movement of material sound...transmitter and receiver.

H: It makes random sounds? You said there was a clicking sound...it's not feedback?

K: It's not a click, it is a continuous sound from the radio receiver. The receiver itself has a superheterodyne system. A superheterodyne radio has an oscillation for the radio frequency signal inside, so if there is another radio signal close to it, a beating sound audio frequency wave will occur. Any way, this special setting of the materials - radio transmitter and receiver - sometimes I put this transmitter on a fishing pole, then the fishing pole is like the manipulation piece I explained before (using the chopsticks or strings to manipulate an object instead of direct contact), the string and the fishing pole make a very delicate setting for action. It's like fishing for sound, sound fishing.

H: It must have been very comical.

K: Yes, very funny to see. This radio wave is wireless, so this action makes a spacial and visual performance, entertaining. In another version, I used an oscillating electric fan to move these objects. There are so many versions of this piece. This is for me a mixed media piece.

H: When you play for the dance company, do you always do improvisations?

K: No, not always. For Merce Cunningham I make compositions, but the compositions for these dance pieces are not written like conventional notated music. I make a composition using a combination of materials, I choose materials and I compose the sound system - how to connect this line to another - sound oscillators and effectors, then there is a kind of selection out of this composition for improvising or not improvising.

H: Do you yourself do all the playing?

K: Sometimes I play with other performers. The electronic crickets (he brings out a whole box of plastic rectangular boxes the size of pill containers...each has two circular piezio disks at either end, a solar panel on the side and a small circuit in the middle) were originally battery operated...the sound is much stronger with the batteries, and this is originally from a Cunningham piece called "Interspersion", because these cricket sounds are very interspersed, very intermittent, very slow...one pulsation in about 10 seconds, very slow emission or pulsation. But each cricket has different timing...the combination of the different crickets is very random. So it is like singing crickets. This is a part of my composition, a very automatic setting for the sound events, but it is also very composed for the randomness, because this is an automatic performance of an electronic sound system. And for the Cunningham piece, I included another part in the sound materials...water bottle caps I found in France. The cap is from the French water "Evian" and this cap is very beautiful, for when it is spun and then slowly stops, it makes a beautiful sound. I also used another sound source of bamboo skewers held on a table with one hand and plucked with the other. This sound is a little similar to the cricket sound when it is amplified through a microphone. We can find very different sounds in the skewers...a sound lower in pitch when the skewer is longer, and higher in pitch when it's shorter. I also found several different sizes of bamboo skewers - thicker and thinner, and each have different sonorities. Sometimes reading text with this timing of the crickets...I listen to the cricket's sound...I choose several crickets, let's say three, and I follow with this sound timing, I take this rhythm for my reading of text. Every click a word or two...this is a kind of interspersion idea, following the timing of the crickets. This was the original idea of this composition for the Cunningham dance, and I played together with another performer.

H: It sounds like an improvisation, but it is a composition in a way...there's a loose structure...you have these sound objects you want to use...you know what the sounds are, but you don't know how they are going to occur...

K: The possibilities are so varied...today I do text reading...the next day I do something else.

John Hudak is a veteran home-taper. Contact: P.O. Box 7784, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7784.

INTERVIEW WITH RANDY GREIF

by Andrew Orford

You may have heard one of the five tapes Randy Greif has out on his own label, Swinging Axe Productions. It's more than likely you've heard at least one of his 22 compilation appearances. Through his use of frozen sound and cinematic montage effects he forms pictures of ornamental tragedy. Randy told me he felt BACTERIA AND GRAVITY, his new album on RRRecords, is a bit more musical. This is part of a conversation we had over the phone in November 1989.

AO: What is your connection with Northridge?

RG: The only thing I have to do with Northridge is that my post office box is there, and that I used to work there. I grew up in Los Angeles, went to school at UC Santa Barbara.

AO: Did you go to Santa Barbara to study music?

RG: Actually, I went there (1975-79) to get a degree in psychology, but I spent more time working on music than I did on psychology. That is when I first started working on electronic music. They had a studio with a Moog synthesizer that took up three walls of the room. I used to take the last shift of the day, get down there at about ten o'clock at night, and spend about six hours in there. The room was underground with no windows and no clocks, so it was easy to lose track of time. I'd come out of the studio at four o'clock in the morning and there would be fog rolling around as I walked home. Those are good hours to work on music.

AO: Could you give me a brief idea of what your studio is like?

RG: I have a small collection of Jesuses which I started a while ago, including some 3-D Jesuses in gold frames that I got in Mexico. The room must have been a baby's room at one time, because it's got white wallpaper with blue and pink squiggles, and there is a little tiny crystal chandelier, which looks like it came out of a haunted mansion. There are also various toy skulls and stuff like that, and a Hieronymous Bosch painting, "The Garden Of Earthly Delights". As far as equipment, I have a Fender mixing console, a Mirage sampler, an Akai S612 sampler, an EML 200 Synthesizer, a Casio (which is used to control the Akai), an 8-track Teac 80-8, various effects units (digital delays, reverb, etc.), a guitar, and odds and ends of percussion instruments.

AO: Your studio is your major outlet for your work.

RG: Definitely.

AO: You have one tape of a live show; have there been others?

RG: I've done a few live shows, but it's difficult. Especially with one person, and with the type of music I'm doing. I had several hours of tape. I would improvise the mix, and then treat the sounds live by putting them through delays and various electronic effects.

I have been getting together with Mikhail Bohonus from Warworld, and we've formed a band called Static Effect. We have a tape out called *TOWER OF IRON*. He brings his equipment over here, we turn on the tape, and mainly we just improvise for a couple of hours. Then, it's mixed down to a two-track master tape. The improvisations are done with some structure. Mikhail might come up with a rhythm, and say, let's work with this, or I'll do something and he'll pick up on that. It comes out sounding a lot more structured than just improvising; I'm not sure why. We do things in a lot of different styles. Anyway, we have a live date set up in a couple of weeks. We are going to be playing a club here in Hollywood. We did a live show several weeks ago at KXLU radio. We brought all our gear over there, and basically improvised like we do in the studio.

AO: How long have you been getting together?

RG: Six weeks.

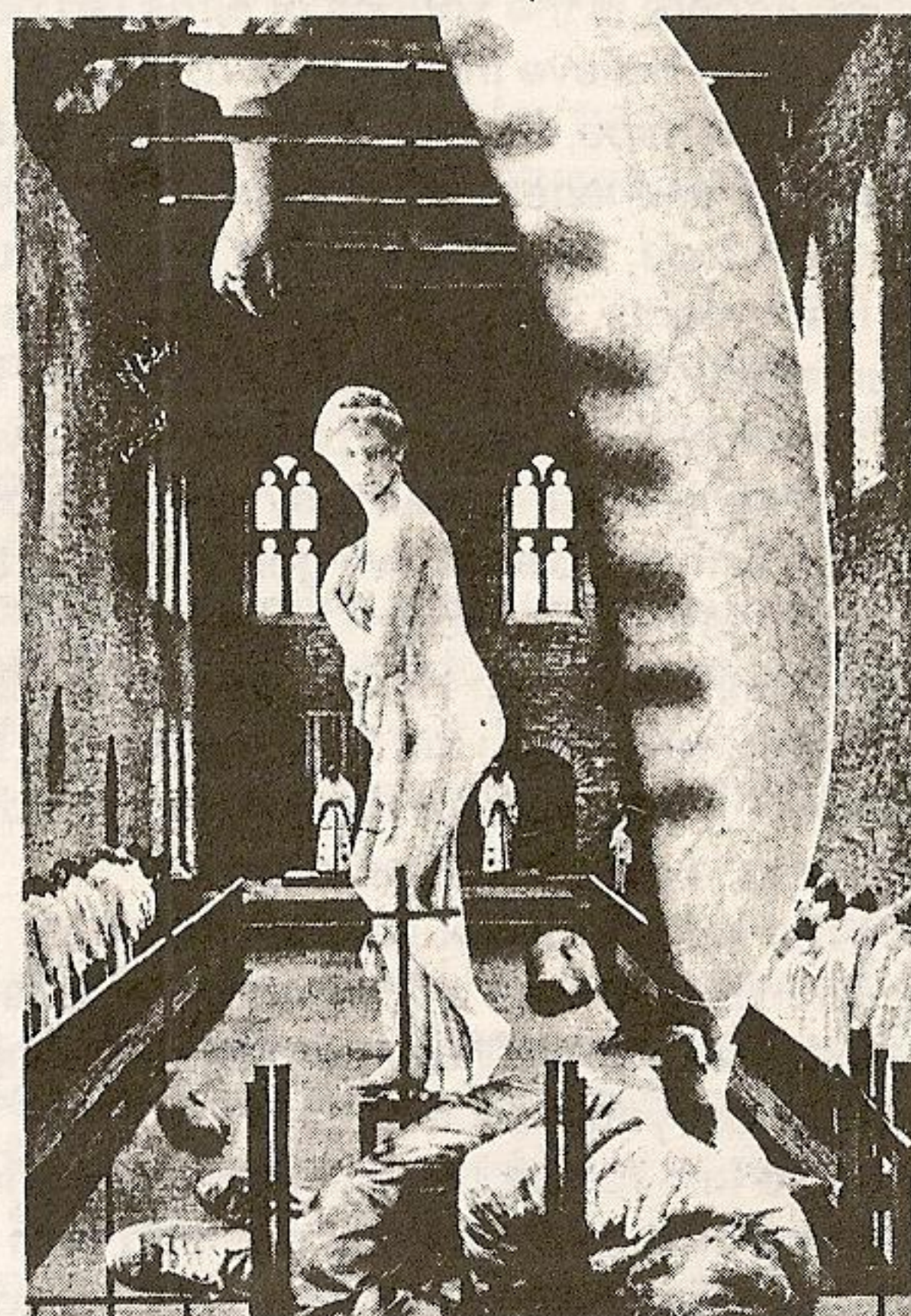
AO: Not very long?

RG: No. The first time we got together it just clicked. I've gotten together with people to play music, and it just wasn't what I wanted, and I'm sure it wasn't what the other people wanted. But when Mikhail and I got

Randy Greif
GOLDEN JOY CLUB



RANDY GREIF
THE SHADOW TRADERS



together we were on the same wavelength.

AO: Do you specifically look for samples when you listen to music?

RG: Definitely, I have been looking for samples in music. I have a compact disc player in the studio now, and that makes it real nice to be sampling off of — just in terms of hitting the button, timing it digitally, stopping it when you want, and, technically, the sound is better. I have been going through all kinds of things to sample, from soul music stuff, to various ethnic music. I like to go into a record store and get budget discs, specifically for samples. Some things that are good for sampling would be: little cuts, or drum beats, which are real non-specific, and don't show the characteristics of the record it's coming off of. It would have to hold together by itself as a sample. I'm not sure how to describe it, but if it's a specific sound, and you are going to use it a lot, it could become tiring, unless you were doing something with it. I try to stay away from anything that is a recognizable sound. I think that most people who work with sampling do it this way too. They don't take a new popular record that's out right now and sample something off of it, and put it out in a month. It would be like taking a Current 93 record and sampling right off that. I couldn't bring myself to do that. However, taking an old Cab Calloway record, and taking a sample off of that, I feel more comfortable with; I'm not sure why. When I get something it's usually not a straight sample. It will be looped in some way. It may be played backwards, or put through various effects. So, even if the samples start out being recognizable, they end up being totally different.

AO: Tell me about your travels. You have three "travel" tapes out: one from Papua New Guinea, one from the Amazon Basin, and the most recent is from Thailand.

RG: I went with the dual purpose of wanting to see these places, and wanting to record some music from these places. Putting out the tapes was a good way of including some document of what I was listening to and recording out there. I think these tapes came out real well.

The first trip was to Papua New Guinea. It's a tribal sort of place. The music there was "roots" folk music, tribal chanting, and real basic drum playing. The idea was just to record the sound of the people around (the music), if there is the sounds of birds (so be it), all this was happening where it was taking place. Field recordings, I believe they're called. Not just focusing on music, but trying to get an overview of the culture as well. On that tape, there is a religious sermon spoken in Pidgin English, there is some folk theatre, and some folk stories and legends from certain parts of the country, told in Pidgin English, and then again in English.

The last tape, from Thailand, is mostly music, and it's broken down into tribal music, where they build their own instruments. It's very different from the folk and the classical. Since my first trip to New Guinea I've gotten a new good quality tape deck. It's a Marantz portable PDM130. It's a small deck, and it has real nice sound quality. I go to these places not knowing anything about the music there. I go figuring that if they have an interesting culture, then they are probably going to have something interesting to record. It's always been the case with the places I've gone. Even if there was no music there whatsoever, that would be OK. I'd be recording something else.

The South American tape was done in the mountains where you get the Andean harp playing, and in the river basin, where you get much more of a tribal sound. The next place that I'd like to take a trip to is Nagaland. It's in the very northern tip of India, bordering on Burma. A hard place to get to, but it looks really interesting, a very tribal sort of place.

AO: Who is Alva Svoboda? Is he a poet?

RG: I don't know if he would like to be called one, but I guess for this it's OK. Alva, right now, is down in Nicaragua and El Salvador, probably stirring up trouble down there.

AO: How did you work together?

RG: I had him read a collection of poems he had written, then blended it together with my music. He just came and did this. I had the tape, and then I spent eight or nine months working on it and building things around it. It runs the gamut, from total voice manipulation, cutting up his voice and putting it back together, to the other end of the spectrum, which is a relatively straight reading of his poem, with just an atmospheric backdrop added to it. The tape EASY GREEN PROOF is the total sum of that collaboration.

We then started another collaboration with a real wide scope. The project was intended as an opera about the Iran-Contra Scandal. Actually, it was even broader than that. It was an opera about conspiracy in general. Since it is such a broad topic we've had a hard time picking it up and putting it together. He started doing writings for it and I started putting a few things together. Those collaborations are on the last tape I put out, **SHADOW TRADERS**.

AO: Let's talk about your latest record.

RG: Let's start with the second side. It's hearkening back to earlier work I did. It's a long piece with different movements, from a very atmospheric thing, to a violent percussive thing.

AO: Is the title, "**Gravity**", specific? Are you trying to evoke the downward pull of gravitation?

RG: What I was trying to evoke at the time was a life and death cycle. Boy, does that sound really heavy and pompous. Bacteria is something we need for survival, and is also a cause of illness and death. In this way, gravity is the ultimate pull of death. I'm not trying to deal with what's true or what's not true. I'm more interested in the idea of it. This is coming from seeing Timothy Leary, but I'm not saying that I am an advocate of what he is talking about. In his speech, he said gravity is what kills us, and nothing else. As an idea, I like it and it's true to some extent. Gravity is pulling down on the organs in our body, causing aging.

AO: Were the separate parts of "**Gravity**" originally made for the piece?

RG: It was all intended as one piece, and written as one piece.

AO: How long did it take from inception to completion?

RG: Probably four or five months.

AO: And this was the only piece you were doing at this time?

RG: Yeah, I was basically working on that one piece of music. I try to keep on one piece of music at a time, although now I have a few bits and pieces lying around. When I was working on this album I would work on one piece of music, and finish it, then work on another one. There were a lot of pieces that did not get onto

this record. Not because I thought they were lesser pieces of music, but I was looking for ones that fit with the others. I don't think the last piece on the first side fits too well, but I kind of intended it at the time.

AO: Was that piece ("*Good Bye, My Good Friends*") meant for someone in particular, or as a memorial in general?

RG: As a memorial in general. There was a lot of work I had done before that was a call for suicide. This is coming out of that. The clipping was taken off some record about the Constitution. That phrase, after it had been sampled, had a mood to it that I liked.

AO: In "*The Age Of Epilepsy*" what does the epilepsy refer to?

RG: The connection was in my mind in doing that piece. I was envisioning some ethnographic films of Africans. They were doing some rituals. They were lying down and convulsing on the ground, foaming at the mouth as the spirits were entering their bodies. That image was in my mind.

AO: This album has some sort of rhythm happening all throughout it.

RG: Yeah, that's true. Most of the record does have rhythm in it, and it's more percussive than previous things. At the time I was working on this album I was also doing more atmospheric kinds of things. I probably have got an album and a half's worth of material that was possibly meant for this record. What I did was just go through the materials I had, after working for about a year and a half, and find the pieces that I thought worked best as a group.

AO: When did you start **Swinging Axe Productions** and why?

RG: It started in 1983. I started it because I'd been working on music since 1975, and I had a collection of all kinds of stuff. I moved to Los Angeles, and wasn't involved with the music community here, then I picked up a copy of **OP Magazine**. I thought, wow, there's a whole bunch of people who are doing this stuff, and they are sending them into this magazine. So, I put together four tapes of music that I'd worked on at various stages, and called them different band names: **The Love Stumps**, **Screaming Dukduks**, **Max & Mel**, **Face Cancer**, plus stuff that was under my own name. I was coming in sort of naive, and didn't really understand this networking thing that was starting then, and I figured I should have a label for it. I thought it could be exciting, and I also thought that maybe I could distribute someone else's music as well. I found that as soon as I got a little catalogue together, and ran a couple ads, and put some tapes in for review, all these tapes and things were pouring into me from people who were basically interested in the same thing I was, saying, "Hey, listen to this, do you want to distribute this?". Then I started writing to the people, and it just took off from there. At a certain point, I was getting so much material that I had to start limiting to things that I felt fit. Now there are about 60 things on it, and each new catalogue has about a dozen new things.

AO: Is it a one-man operation?

RG: Yes. I like to keep the label small. Mine is perhaps smaller than some, but it's bigger than others. This keeps it to a reasonable amount of work. A couple hours a day, or once or twice a week, I just spend a day getting caught up on mail, and sending out tapes and records. Any more than that would be too much of a job, or a regular business. I don't want to get burned out to the point where I don't want to be doing it.

Randy Greif may be contacted at Swinging Axe Productions, P.O. Box 199, Northridge, CA 91328. In addition to being an independent music journalist, Andrew Orford is also an electronic music recording artist. For more information write him at 20 Park Ave., Petaluma, CA 94952.

RIK RUE

Interviewed by Michael Chocholak

Rik Rue is a sound artist currently residing in Sydney, Australia. His tools are the cassette tape recorder and the myriad of sounds he captures and subsequently manipulates on tape, either in the studio or in live performance. He works both solo and in group context with MIND/BODY/SPLIT and SOCIAL INTERIORS. In addition he also does a radio show on 2MBS-FM in Sydney where he often performs live-on-the-air collage mixes of various records and cassettes. Shortly after conducting this interview, Rik was off to performances in Austria, Holland, Hungary, France and England. In addition to the tapeography at the end of the interview, his music has also been featured on a number of compilations including RRRecords, Tellus and Insane Music.

MC: How do you feel about the distinction some people make between music and 'sonic art'?

RR: Well, I can understand the difference and why the distinctions are made. I tend not to define it so openly. A lot of works stem from environmental recordings to the area of industrial noise gathering and development of those musics in installations by various people in the audio and visual art area. In fact, sound has been used as an installation in itself. This is not new - it stems from the days of the futurists, the dadaists, and musique concrete. I suppose it's broken new boundaries in the amount of people that listen to it because of the new ears and the new names.

MC: How did you come to choose the tape recorder as the vehicle for your work and do you view it as a musical instrument with yourself as a musician, as a piece of processing equipment with yourself as an engineer, or...?

RR: I initially used the tape recorder as a documentation tool and prior to that as a listening device. I started with a two-track machine and recorded anything that moved from the sound of smashing bottles to garbage tins being thrown down alleyways. Later on because of my love of music and documentation I suppose this became apparent. I was involved in non-ideomatic improvisational music with such people as Jon Rose in the seventies for an extended period of time. During the mid seventies, I was documenting a lot of music. I wasn't involved in improvisatory music at the time, but slowly I grew to like the tape recorder as my form of expression. As far as tape recorders I've pretty much settled on exclusive use of cassettes for 1) economics, and 2) I began to like the medium. I like cassettes because they're democratic and immediate and they're freely available to quite a lot of the population around the world. Hence the networking of musicians and composers being able to speak and contact each other directly in that medium. Another reason I like the tape recorder is the development as a compositional tool. Home studio usage has become very accessible, i.e. four track cassette recorders such as the Portastudio and the various Fostex machines. I use a Portastudio in conjunction with a mixer - anything up to three or four tape recorders at a given time depending on whatever performance I'm trying to pull off and express. Along with the various processing devices one can obtain, one can turn the machine into an instrument giving it the flexibility in areas from rhythm tracks to atmospherics, sound texts and vocals. One becomes the engineer, the producer and the composer of one's work.

MC: Who and/or what are your major influences?

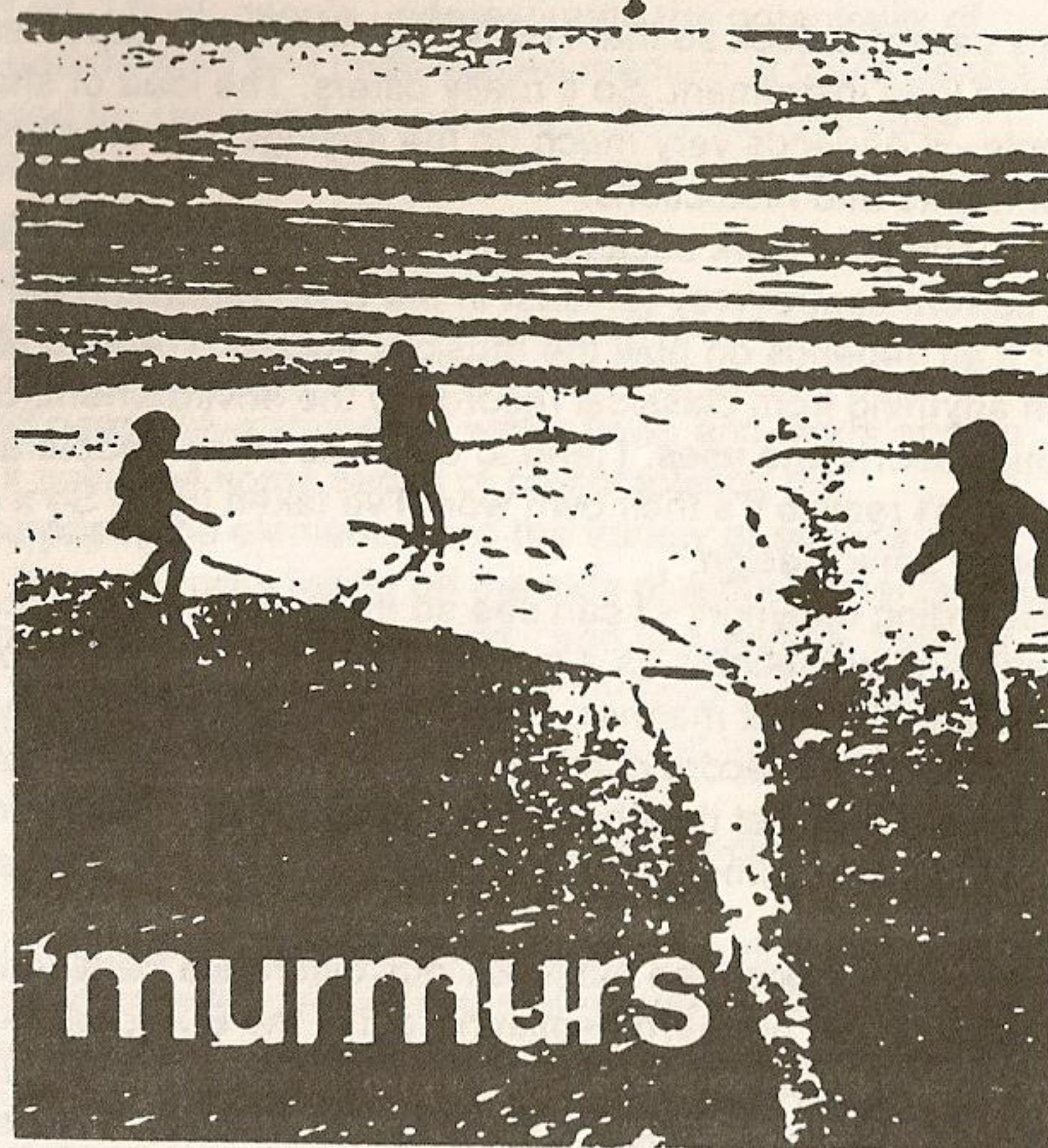
RR: Personally I'm very much into dub music and reggae music. I'm very influenced by various traditional indigenous musics from different countries from Africa to India. Having spent a little bit of time in Asia I was very affected by the various modes of music. The list is too long... In the contemporary area I suppose anything that's made a sound. I'm very inspired by sounds of the environment around me. Anything from elements such as the sea, rivers, water, fire, wind and so forth. I'm starting to develop an interest in ornithology and environmental soundscapes that I often hear when I'm in semi-wild areas in the country. The other human composers are just too many to name. From Bach to be-bop I suppose.

MC: How do you usually approach a composition; do you improvise or do you work from a distinctly

RIK RUE



BEND AN EAR



BEND
AN
EAR

structured idea?

RR: Initially I've developed a lot of interests. One of my major influences was improvised music from ideomatic improvisations like jazz to the use of non-ideomatic performances, the European improvised school - from England, Derek Bailey and Evan Parker, various European composers, and free musicians. Depends on what I'm trying to do. The boundaries aren't so intense now as I'm developing my own skills. I usually work on an idea or sometimes develop an improvisation into a structure. I tend to work with wordless images when I'm using vocal and text things. This gives a certain sense of expression and usually leads on to a fair amount of mucking around and quite a scope for improvisation.

MC: Does your approach to studio work differ from your live performances? If so, how?

RR: Well, yes. When I do live performances - which I'm starting to do a little more of now - I tend to try to equalize the tapes. It's almost like trying to put breath into the tape; some type of human characteristic, trying to put a bit of myself into the tape. Because I do live mixing, I can use one of a number of equalization changes to structure the work and develop it. I've got more of a dramatic approach live, which is obviously centered around performance, than I might have in the studio. I like both areas although I've only started to perform with tape works in the past five years or so and not that frequently. In the studio you've got the flexibility of scratching your nose and being quite casual which would detract from a performance in a live situation.

MC: Since you work both solo and in a variety of collaborative settings, do you have any comments comparing the two experiences (shared energies and ideas versus a single minded focus, etc?)

RR: Solo performance for me centers around my own work with, say, anything up to four tape recorders and a mixer and a four track tape recorder. I've got a lot of machines to handle and I've developed my own mixing techniques. The emphasis is on performing with my instrument. When I'm playing with other groupings such as **MIND/BODY/SPLIT**, which is a four piece ensemble where we've got keyboards and a sampler player also and electronics, I tend to pick up a particular area or function at times. If I had a larger input into a particular track or I composed quite a bit of it, I tend to concentrate on it. I sometimes provide the rhythm tracks or percussion track. Other times I'm playing a lead line through about three different channels

of my cassette deck so that I could be utilizing the tape very similar to the way of a saxophone, lead voice or electric lead instrument. So it really differs. The idea of shared energies appeals to me. I work with different people - it depends very much on the settings, the situation and the musical performance. They've all got their merits and restrictions.

MC: Since your work occasionally uses recordings of other people's work, do you have any comments on the current controversy (at least in the U.S.) regarding sampling of copyrighted material?

RR: It all depends on how the music is utilized. I tend to regurgitate. I do a lot of sampling. I get my stuff from anything from classical records to the environment. Some of it's my own recordings and the manipulations one uses. I tend to credit as many people as I can. Usually some of the artists that I've taken from don't realize it's their own work I've taken from. So it's redigested and spat up into another completely different sonic design.

Regarding copyright - I can see so much plagiarism occurring in other mediums. I simply use tapes as a palette and sometimes as a means. I've got no qualms about the copyright as long as the right people are credited in the right manner. I don't think you're taking anyone's livelihood away from them. It's more of a sore point to the record companies and their dictatorial control of the industry and a few touchy creative artists who feel that they have the ultimate responsibility for their own work. So be it.

MC: Could you comment on the art/music scene in Australia particularly in comparison to Europe, Japan the U.S., etc?

RR: Well, I suppose the most obvious difference between the people that work in sound, or in any medium, to people in the northern hemisphere, i.e. the European/Australian people that have been here for the past two hundred years, is that we live in the bottom of Asia. So, although it's a European invaded country of originally Aboriginal descent, it's distinctly different. We've been here two hundred years living as Europeans so we had a tendency to have a lot of cultural cringes not unlike the Canadians and Americans have. The country has been turned upside down in various environmental ways. It's particularly unique. There's a lot more sensitivity and natural development between various areas of art and identity. There's not so much of the cultural cringe any more. The world is getting much more compact through information, electronics and various mediums. Slowly people aren't so much striving to look for an identity but realizing just the uniqueness of their own situation. With the advent of realizing what a cheated, confused and fucked history we've been given here regarding who and what we are as Australians - keeping in mind that there's been fifty thousand years of Aboriginality here, that Australia has got its own indigenous people - we're very much visitors. A lot more insight and concern has come about with a lot of artists for the nature of their presence here, bearing in mind its only two hundred years of European settlement. Many people in the arts have readdressed their own understanding of the country from the myth and arrogance that we've developed as Europeans. There's much more centeredness and a search for true understanding of being in this country, both from the counterpoint of the unusualness and the difference in the environment in the regional area and the very nature of Aboriginal and indigenous people who were here before us. So there's very much of a readdressing of one's identity here because of the misinformed history of its people. And coupled with the nature of the world now, I just don't think it matters if you came from any place in the world because there's so much information shared - other than those living in a country where there's repression of information. Australia has developed quite a unique blending and understanding of both its European position and more recently its own environmental history which goes far deeper than the two hundred years of European settlement. And by addressing that and acknowledging that, one's sense of understanding alters quite a lot.

MC: Since you also work in radio, any comments on that medium and its directions/potentials?

RR: I think radio is very under-utilized in many ways, both because of commercial restrictions and the focus on power and control of various mediums, especially music. It's getting a bit more discouraging because there's an incredible state of conservatism and big bucks I suppose. I've been doing radio on a small FM station in Sydney. It's basically a classical station. I have many problems as far as the restrictions in playing radiophonic works, experimental works, and improvisation tape works. There are so many sub-groups within my area of involvement and compared to other mediums it can be quite conflicting. Radio can be used

potentially in a much more adventurous way in sound art. I think people underestimate the potentiality of their ears as opposed to their eyes. I think it's a very understated and undervalued medium. It could be used in so many creative manners; music specially composed for radio and radiophonics. This has obviously occurred in many ways from various stations in the States to Europe, but unfortunately a lot of restrictions apply because of the potentiality to subvert other people's ears.

MC: Any favorite places to acquire sounds for your work? Why?

RR: Basically I like going out to the environment because with a tape recorder you can penetrate it somewhat. I've got various little favorite places. I did a recording called **WATER WORKS** some years ago which took up an obsession with the flowing water and percussive sounds of water flows and rivers and so forth. They were pleasing environments to be in and it gave me some sense of contemplating the environment itself. Bush settings are nice. I like the surprise, the elements, and the variety of sounds one gets from anything from scurrying animals to twisting twigs to rocks falling off the side of embankments while one's trying to climb them to various mammal and bird sounds that one can find - and in Australia, believe me, there's lots of strange sounds there. People and texts are also another one of my favorites. I love the little idiosyncrasies that come along with people's expressions and I try to look for these in various vocal sounds.

MC: What amazing exploits and circumstances have you gone through in obtaining your recordings? (come on Rik, there should be some tales here)

RR: Given that one of my main areas of interest is environmental recording I've found myself in quite a lot of peculiar situations; putting myself in a challenging position with various facets of nature - if you can call nature natural. One of them is hanging off waterfalls to try to get a particular sound and being so involved with the particular sound I wanted to hear and thereby slipping and perilously hanging over 300 foot embankments. Numerous amounts of being immersed in various streams and rivers. Exploits with various animals - while I was recording some pigs the little binaural mics disappeared up the pig's nose and I virtually got attacked by a sow who pinned me up against a wall. I had to get a handler to get the sow off of me. Mind you, the sow was something of an exhibition sow and it was very aggressive and I nearly got crushed to death recording. So just recording one tends to follow one's ears with a microphone and sometimes one overlooks the potential danger or stupidity of a situation you're in. Other times such as in various rain forests of having leeches crawl into my tape recorder is a pretty messy business. Spiders dangling off microphones. Various scenarios with people nearly walking off train platforms onto the rails in the hope of getting a closer sound of the hissing of the brakes of electric trains. Countless many other things, some amusing upon reflection, some downright foolish and dangerous. But if one gets a sound, one is happy and it seems to have been worth the effort. Cape Baron geese raced off with my microphones, microphone hoods and bits of equipment when I was recording recently which was quite amusing since they're very damn large geese and they're very aggressive. I think I must have met the delinquent of the pack. Environmental and sometimes urban areas can be quite dangerous; like walking in risky parts of town just to get that late night feeling of ambience. Trying to be somewhat inconspicuous with a microphone can lead to some disastrous results; it's very hard to explain to people while you're recording in a particular area just to get the particular quality of sound reflections of buildings and the general atmosphere of the area. It's part and parcel; get the sound and get out. And try not to leave any footprints, eh?

MC: What future works do we have to look forward to from you?

RR: I'm working on two soundscape projects at the moment. One is a radiophonic piece for the Australian Broadcasting Commission that goes by the title of **INTRUSIONS** which basically deals with some of the aspects of fear and the environment and the risk of the environment. I know it's a very fashionable and a very necessary area to make comments on. I think sound artists can do this in this specific area. I've got a library of sounds I've collected while I'm putting this together to illustrate the myth of what people consider worldliness and various country and natural environments - as if any is natural in this day and age - and their alienation from various aspects of being city orientated people. I'm also working with **MIND/BODY/SPLIT**. We've just got an album out called **IF IT'S NOT ON IT'S NOT ON**. And a solo cassette I think in the future

utilizing more pilfered, or as I call it 'plagiaristics', and plunderphonic type of material which comes from both stuff I've recorded and stuff I've lifted from pre-produced packages which come from all over the place. That'll be coming out. So I'm working on about four or five fronts - any front that's possible to interest me. I'm looking forward to a bright future which I somewhat feel pessimistic about given the state of rodent nature of human beings.

MC: Anything you'd like to add to all of this?

RR: Some people I suppose see me as being very unsettled in any one area. I suppose this is unavoidable. I think a lot of people around here are flexible in that degree too; working in sound areas and developing various components of sound into musical compositions. Sometimes I work with people such as sound text artist Amanda Stewart where I'll be utilizing her voice in a series of improvisations - she'll be actually performing some sound text poetry along with the tapes. So that sound text area, that's more the political arm because she's a very politically based person and a feminist. Another area I work in is the group context with MIND/BODY/SPLIT who are an eclectic collection of people producing something rather like a smorgasbord of sounds using both conventional instruments such as vocals and things like saxophone and in other areas electronic keyboards and sampling devices along with tapes. There is much more border interest in jumping categories. The times where people were very possessive about categories is over for what I think thinking musicians and thinking people interested in music are on about. I think that's one of the most exciting things about life. And networking - I never tire of getting tapes and hearing tapes. Sometimes it's damn hard - because one isn't totally seeking out a commercial direction in this area. One has to stay alive and sometimes that puts a bit of a stop on it. But life goes on and there's a lot of exciting work being performed and being made accessible through areas of networking and smaller publications to get more of an individual understanding of different approaches that mass media will not accomodate. The artist always has a very perilous role in this situation because of his individuality that sets him apart. I find this an intriguing area; to reach as many people as I possibly can without jeopardizing my sense of expression. I've found various ways of doing this by making my equipment accessible to a great deal of people and by working on projects that aren't particularly based on my total interests. It's interesting to see what directions you can work with other people in this regard; doing work in completely different areas and idioms of sound and music that you possibly wouldn't have thought of or come across. It's a wild world.

Primary tapeography:

Rik Rue - Murmurs

Water Works

Bend An Ear

Heavy Handed

Mind/Body/Split - Mind/Body/Split

If It's Not On It's Not On

Social Interiors - Social Interiors

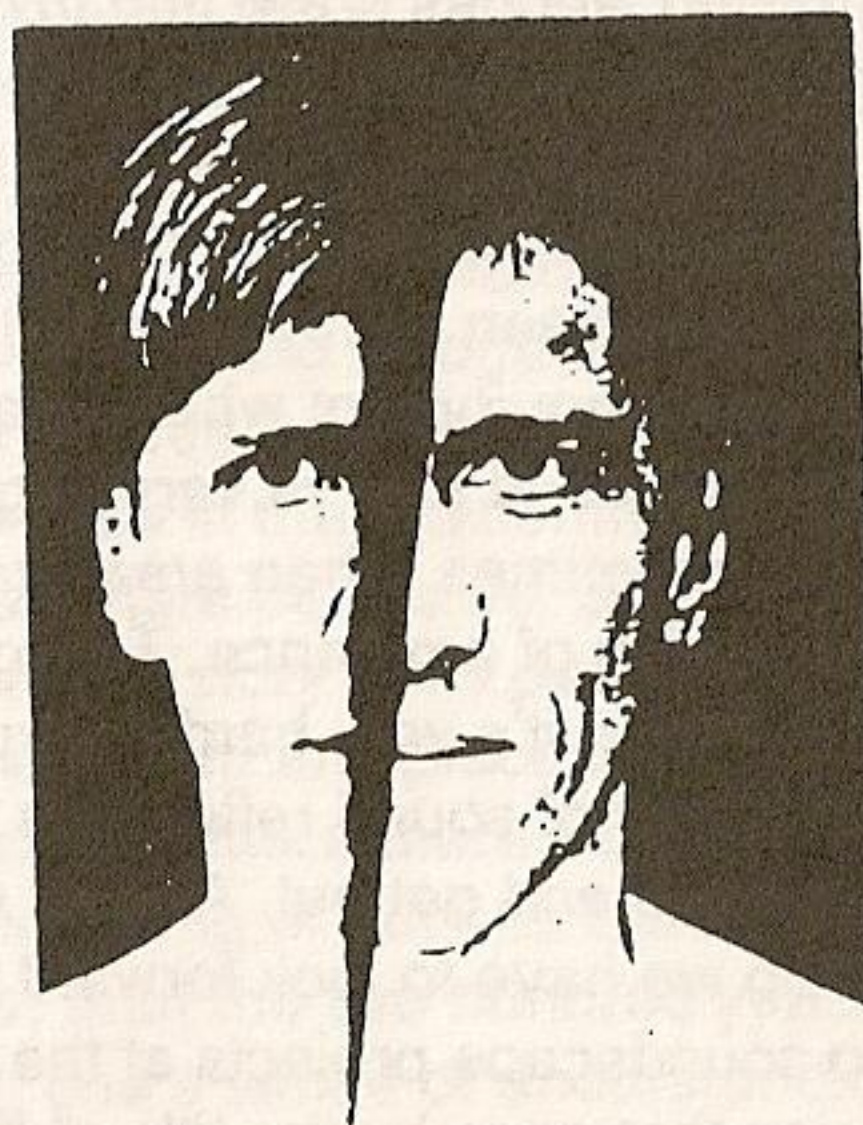
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Vidna Obmana (Dirk Serries) with PBK

THE VIDNA OBMANA AMERICAN TOUR

by PBK

THE BELGIAN SCENE

"Electronic Body Music". "New Beat". This is club music, dance-floor oriented with a hard-edged electronic beat. Front 242. The Klinik. A Split Second. This dance "revolution" brought to you, here in the states, by Wax Trax - if you care. As always, the true innovators remain ignored, that is, until somebody can come up with the right marketing scheme. In the meantime, there are few venues for live performance of experimental music and the cassette scene is treated with disregard, in favor of vinyl releases by the purveyors of "New Beat" with their mindless, redundant "Acid House" cliches. Oh well, "Disco" always has sucked...

Despite the "New Beat" craze in Belgium, there are some labels worth investigating. I'm not one to do a local "scene" report, 'cause I've never been there, but here are a few of the labels I've been in touch with: **INSANE MUSIC** - created by members of the group **Human Flesh**. Best known for their excellent compilation tapes featuring everyone from **Legendary Pink Dots** to **Psyclones** to **Vivenza** to (our very own) **Dog As Master**. **3RIO RECORDINGS** - is **Sandy Nys'** label. **Sandy** also runs the **NETWORK** radio program broadcast from Antwerp. Latest offerings here include the **Hybryds'** **Octahedron** single (EP) of hypnotic trance-dance. **CORROSIVE TAPES** - is run by **Peter Moreels** and has many superb offerings, including the **Informator** series of Czechoslovakian music underground, the **Heartbeat** compilations and other tapes by **D.Z. Lectric**, **Arnovah** and **Radio Diffusor Maracaibo**. Sadly, for us, **Peter** is closing down his label to concentrate on his family and other forms of art. So, for the moment anyway, the above-mentioned recordings are not available. **THE DECADE COLLECTION** - supercedes the former **MECHANICAL ORCHESTRATION MUSIC** as **Vidna Obmana's** latest venture. Here one finds specifically

the work of Vidna, solo and in collaboration, concentrating on ambient music only (no harsh sounds).

VIDNA OBMANA - EVOLUTION

LADD-FRITH carries a tape called **ONLY FEAR WILL SURVIVE**, an excursion into synthesized nightmares, echoed-out, pitch-shifted and manic. This is the Vidna Obmana of old. Throughout the early 80's and until 1986 (or thereabouts), his sound was definitely of the "Power Electronics" variety. I happened upon his work in retro, so I had no idea that his most recent work was entirely different. Still, I found his noisy work intriguing and proceeded to get in touch personally. **DEATHCHAMBER-TRANCEDREAMED** (**VIS'A'VIS**, Japan) was one of the first tapes that he sent to me (as trade) and immediately one notices the difference. Vidna has moved beyond, matured into something more thoughtful, more progressive. While this work is not yet ambient, it is a slow-moving mass of sound that lumbers from one point to the other, shifting and changing colour along the way. This recording, along with several others (**EXPERIENCE ARTAUD** in particular), defines the concept of **MECHANICAL ORCHESTRATION MUSIC**, the appellation he designated to all of his work released in 1988. Vidna described this project as an "...atmospheric and trance(like) music that provides the human spirit which makes concrete a feeling of uncontrolled dreams".

THE DECADE COLLECTION is the latest incarnation of Vidna Obmana's label, a step up in quality of sound and packaging. It is no coincidence that this concept begins with the first collaboration between Vidna Obmana and **PBK**. Through correspondence and intense exploration of each other's world we were able to attain a single-mindedness, the result being a unique manifesto recording titled **THE MONUMENT OF EMPTY COLOURS**, mixed and produced by Vidna, utilizing many of my sources. Subtle, calm and flowing sounds, shimmering chords are punctuated by crystalline tones with an underbelly of tension and release, which puts this, in some ways, close to the German Progressive school of the 70's. A living, breathing sound.

Vidna brings this concept to its most beautiful resolution on his latest offering, **GATHERING IN FROZEN BEAUTY**. The sound is similar to **MONUMENT**, but with an even lighter touch. Tiny sparkles of sound move in and out of the mix juxtaposed against a backdrop of heaving sound-mass. This is music that belies its simple means; once one ventures inside, they find a complex structural concept - this is thoughtful music... How did Vidna Obmana come around from earlier works like **HOPE AND DIE**, with its obscene edge of **Whitehouse/SPK**-derived hardcore electronics to this music of quiet beauty and gentle spirit? I hoped to find out when he came to America in the Summer of 1989 to play live shows in the San Francisco Bay area, where we would meet, and he would stay with me in San Bernardino the week following...

VIDNA OBMANA - AMERICAN TOUR

I met Vidna Obmana (**Dirk Serries**) in Santa Cruz, Friday, June 16th, after driving up about seven hours from Southern California where I live. That night he was to play live at the Cafe Chameleon along with **Eric Muhs** and **IAO Core** (and later, a designated "special guest", namely myself). This was also an opportunity to meet many of the Bay Area luminaries, who turned out in force on Saturday night in San Francisco. **Das** and **Robo** of **Big City Orchestra**, **AMK** of **BANNED PRODUCTIONS**, **Brook Hinton** of **SUBELECTRICK** fame, **Elden M.** (aka **Allegory Chapel**) were all there, as well as some local disc jockeys of alternative radio. Many performances: **IAO Core** were especially intriguing as a duo, playing slender feedback music as accompaniment to a self-produced (?) video (screened on a monitor at the opposite side of the stage). The elusive **D.D. Downer** showed up in S.F. to play a set utilizing several home-made vocal chambers to maximize his chilling rant-and-rave, set against a backdrop of pre-recorded tape. **Eric Muhs** is a real crowd-pleaser with his tape loop music, but his "affected" passion seemed phony to me. I played my noisy set with the assistance of **Elden** and **Vidna**, a visceral but sloppy performance. **Vidna** played a beautiful set in Santa Cruz, a nearly psychedelic sound, set off by a poetic reading initiated by **Das** which fit in beautifully. The highlight, for me, was to have been my collaborative set on Saturday night with **Vidna**, recreating a track from our **MONUMENT** recording. However, technical difficulties corrupted our performance, and, a little more than midway through, we faded out. The audience didn't realize it though and gave us a great

response.

So, after a hectic weekend, we drove back to San Bernardino, Vidna and I, looking forward to a quiet week together for work and discussion. One of the things that immediately impressed me about him was his passion for quality which manifests itself through many detailed ideas/concepts which he is constantly revising in an attempt, however futile, for perfection. He had written to me earlier, "For three years I've been busy arranging the sound for **Vidna Obmana**, but each time a tape was released, afterwards I wasn't satisfied any more of the product. Until the **MECHANICAL ORCHESTRATION MUSIC** concept was created, I thought I was almost there, but still a few changes had to be made. (Now)...with this cassette, **MONUMENT OF EMPTY COLOURS**, is the first product of 100% satisfaction".

I was also impressed by his commitment to the path he has chosen; he simply will not compromise his music. This is made especially clear by the fact that he refused any offers of compensation for the live shows he did, saying that he did not want financial considerations to come into play with regards to his music. Concessions of any kind are out of the question...

The opportunity to play together would not come again until later that week, yet the occasion proved to be an amazing experience of dynamic live improvisation. Later, on playback, we found that the recording of this performance had been distorted by a much too high recording level and was rendered nearly useless as a result. Despite that, it was still great to work and we only wished that we could've represented ourselves so well during our live Bay Area performances.

Throughout most of the week, I had to work, but Vidna stayed busy (even with the heat, 100 degrees every day!). He worked in my studio on sources for his **GATHERING IN FROZEN BEAUTY** tape and many nights were spent listening to those finished sources (graceful adventures of sound), discussing them and mapping out future plans. We also listened to a lot of music by other artists as well (Jeff Grinke's **CITIES IN FOG** graced my turntable more than once throughout this time). As the week ended we even had the delight of attending the opening-night premiere of **BATMAN**, which we both loved. Finally, I sent him off via L.A. International Airport to Arizona where he would stay for another week to play more live shows...

Now, after several months, I still haven't entirely satisfied my curiosity about Vidna... His new solo tape is superb - but is he at a crossroads now? Where will he go from here? One thing he has proven is a kind of "fearlessness" about stepping forward into uncharted territory, working in different areas from whence he came and finally, it comes down to an immense personal growth which can only be "realized" through means other than those that one has become accustomed to through habit or repetition. It will be interesting to watch his evolution...

CONTACTS:

THE DECADE COLLECTION, c/o Dirk Serries, Parijslaan 173, 2710 Hoboken, Belgium.

PBK RECORDINGS, 115 W. 33rd St., San Bernardino, CA 92405.

LADD-FRITH, P.O. Box 967, Eureka, CA 95502.

VIS'A'VIS, 2-12-3 Hamadayama, Suginami-ku, Tokyo 168, Japan.

CORROSIVE TAPES, c/o Peter Moreels, 5 Terrasse De La Madelaine, 7500 Tournay, Belgium.

INSANE MUSIC, 2, Grand Rue, 6190 Courcelles, Belgium.

3RIO RECORDINGS, c/o Sandy Nys, Juliaandillenstraat 22, Antwerpen, Belgium.

A CLOSER LOOK AT LAWRENCE SALVATORE'S HALLUCINOGENIC DISINTEGRATION

by Dan Floretti

In 1988, Lawrence Salvatore wrote, arranged, and recorded a mammoth epic song cycle, *The Hallucinogenic Disintegration Of Psychedelic Pop Orchestras*. Most likely, it won't go down in history as one of the greatest pop muzick masterpieces of all time. At least, not in the way that *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* did. Even coming, as it did, only about six years after *Thriller*, whose sales are within shouting distance of half a billion. But unlike the pabulum pop of M. Jackson, Lawrence's *Hallucinogenic* is not sickly-sweet. He approaches many of the songs full-throttle, with drums and keyboards in a dense mix of overdubbed sounds and effects, treated vocals, and a surreal panoply of lyric nonsequiters.

Although Lawrence is quick to point out that the entire tape recounts an entire evening of his life, he never states anywhere on the cassette itself that it is a "concept album" — indeed, there is no way you can print "This is a concept album" on a tape or LP with any kind of subtlety. But there is much subtlety here, at least below the surface. In fact, there are quite a few levels of awareness at work. Consider this verse: "She's got a problem/That cannot be taken/Too lightly or too seriously/I've got a problem, what is yours?"

Superficially, this might not seem to mean much. But at a deeper level, this verse acts as a device to merge the different concentric realities involved. There's the persons and events Lawrence sings about ("She"), Lawrence himself as observer ("I"), and the listening audience which he is telling all this to ("you"). All three, although seemingly distant and separate, are unified by one common condition: having "a problem".

And therein lies another recurring theme in this, and other Lawrence Salvatore tapes. Distance; the inability to "connect". "It would be such a treat if you'd let me watch you eat, just pretend that I'm not even here", he sings in *The Swimtrunk of Yearning*. Similarly, in *The Spirit Of Samba Is Everywhere*, a mysterious female "is the envy of every hairdresser", but "will not cha-cha for" Lawrence. Seemingly silly lyrics with deeper, serious meaning. Again, with different levels of awareness.

Even the title of this work, with its reference to "Hallucinogenic Disintegration" relates implicitly to this concept. Hallucinations: on one level, they have no basis in reality. On another level, they are very real — at least to the hallucinator. Lawrence sings of this subversion of reality in *The Average Joe Vs. The Not-So-Average Joe*: Someone poked "little sis" with a needle, she starts to deflate. Lawrence asks, "Are you sub-sonic, or just an average Joe?". Or, perhaps he is asking, what keeps your world together, why isn't your world falling apart? Or deflating, as it were.

This, too, is a recurring theme — "Reality" vs. "insanity", and the detachment of modern-day living. Everyday life (Lawrence's, at least) must seem to go by at an enormous clip. All sorts of things are happening. Lawrence's response is to create a dense and hectic mix in the tape — a swirling, titillating morass. Perhaps too dense for some; David Claffardini, the editor of *SOUND CHOICE*, dismissed it as "annoying".

Lawrence may be slightly aware of this. At one juncture, there is a disclaimer of sorts: "I don't want to cause you alarm/And I don't want to ever cause you harm"

He's not some guy trying to be obnoxious, he has a purpose. To "paint a pretty picture", he says. "Dance a better samba."

And this is where we get to the "essence" of this work: "Flaws have been externalized/Truthfulness will conquer all/Now the pain is over/Brilliant orange sunshine/Opens up a vista to a better way of staying happy"

This, then, is the crucial recurring theme in this tape — self-examination. Not the namby-pamby self-revelations of a Barry Manilow. Or even the just-give-me-some-truth openness of a John Lennon. On this

tape, **Salvatore** not only bares all, he confronts himself with what he sees. His fears, insecurities, passions, his True Self. "There's a lesson to be learned from this", he concludes. And it's not **Salvatore on Salvatore**, alone, secluded in his ivory tower. Just the opposite. He confronts the alienation and separateness he feels by pouring out his guts in public. Not for himself. For you, the audience. Then he joins you in the audience, and sees himself as you see him. "My insight's slacked, my will's been cracked", he exclaims. And then?

"Suddenly He Knows." He? Who is "HE"? He, in this case, is **Lawrence Salvatore**. Having confronted, and thus, having overcome, his own doubts and fears, **Lawrence** is left only with **Lawrence Salvatore**. Finally, he knows who he is.

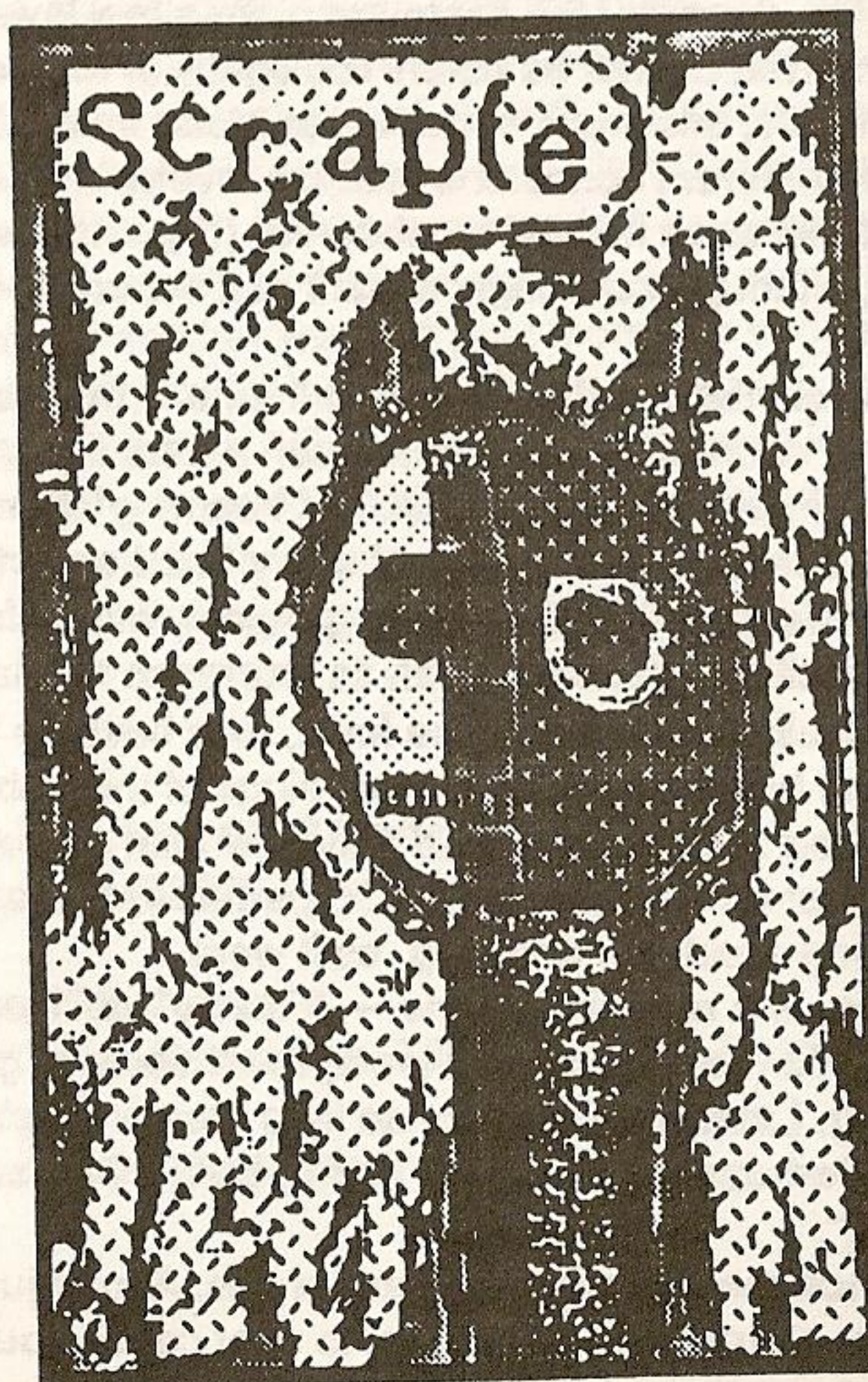
It is this self-revelation that must put **Lawrence Salvatore** on a par with the best of pop songwriters. Rundgren, Lennon, Paul Simon. The mere fact that brilliance like this is overlooked in favor of pap by the likes of Lionel Richie just proves the unfairness of the tyranny of the pop muzick biz. "There's a lesson to be learned from this." Indeed.

Lawrence Salvatore Contact: 211 S. Hebbard, Joliet, IL 60433. Dan Floretti is an avid, active, prolific, eclectic, and one could say "eccentric" home taper and networker and he also runs a label called Kitti Tapes. Write him for more info at 312 N. 3rd Ave., Highland Park, NJ 08904.

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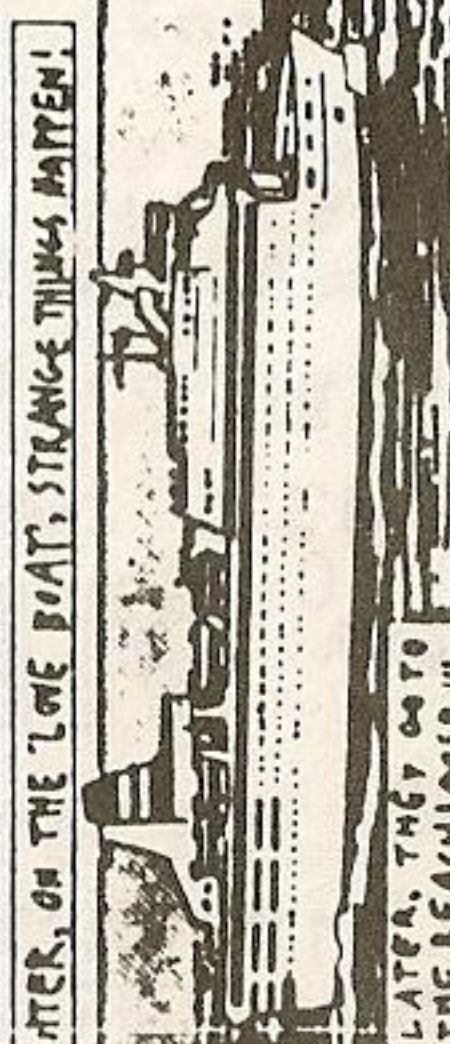
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ARTWORK! IT'S NERVO!
I'M NOT GONNA
PAY A LOT FOR THIS
ARTWORK!
I COULD USE
A DIET SODA
RIGHT ABOUT
NOW!

LATER, THE KIDS VISIT A CAFE WHOSE NAME CON-
TAINS THE NAME OF THE ARTISTES!
AFTER DINNER, I'M
GONNA TAKE MY
GOSHI TO THE TA-
VERN!



GOSHI! JUST
LIKE IN THE
MOVIES!

OH, AND
DON'T ORDER
THE CARBON BLEND
THE CHEF HAD
A COMPLAINT
A MINUTE!



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Old C presently the golfcourse too) had vanished and the old
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these:
III. Who loved not his sister's body
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only temporarily supported by the
membrane of her maidenhead as a min-
of all the whole vast globv earth may
the placed the chadbourne, shockabilly, t
the idea of in murray reams, jeffrey
some presbyterian morgan, and others
not God, could by that means cast himself and his sister
back into the world.

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who loved death above all, who loved only death, loved
and lived in a deliberate and almost ritualized way.

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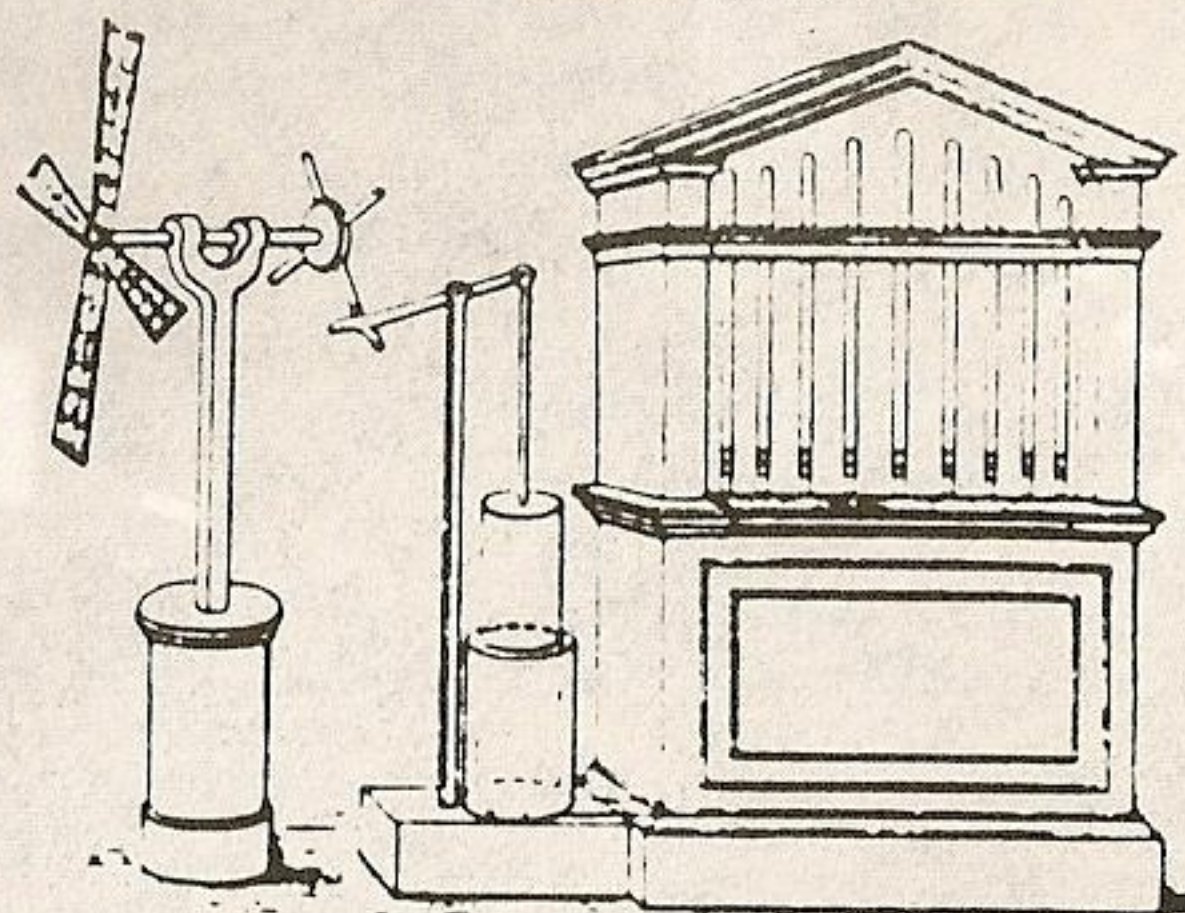
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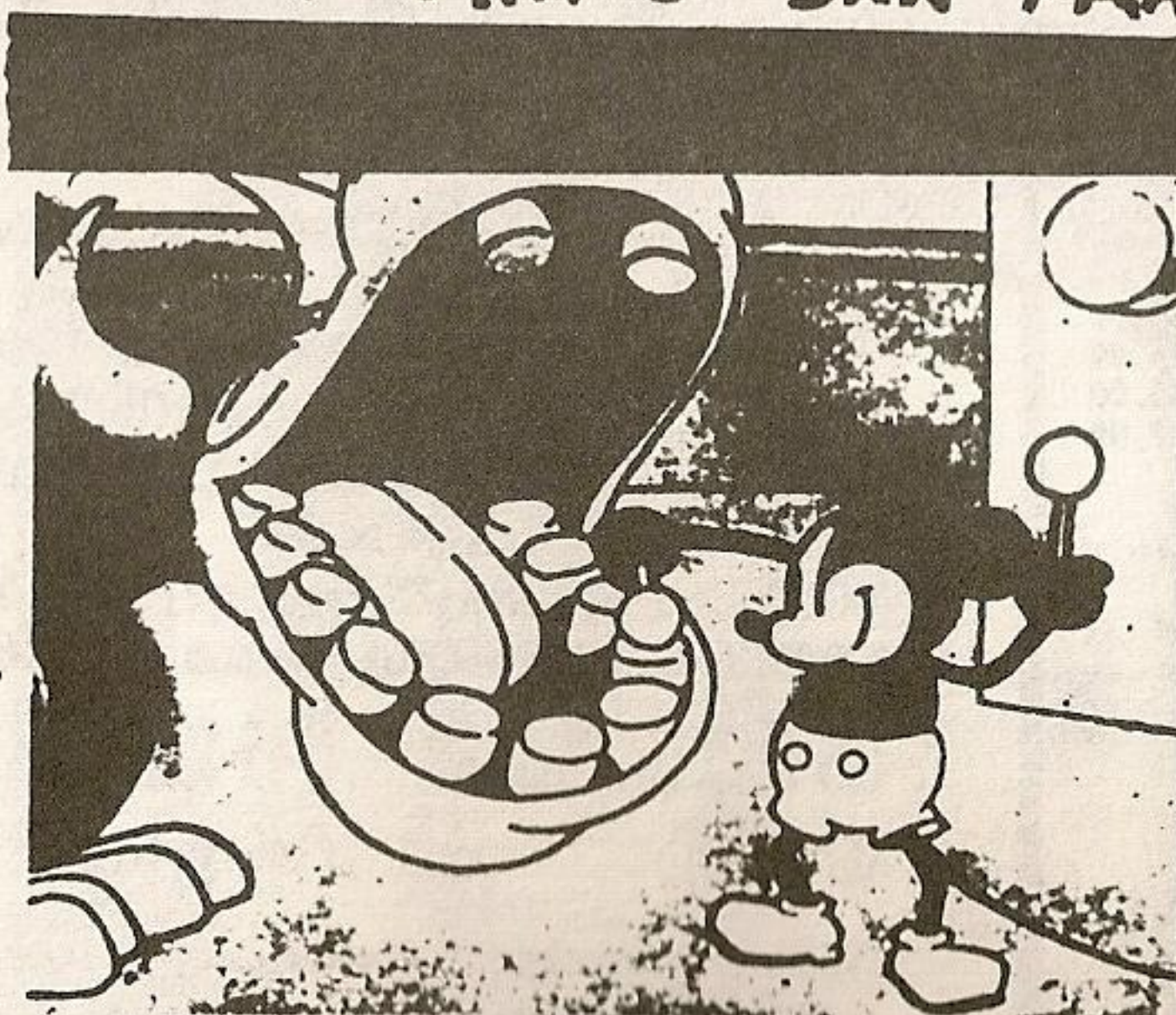
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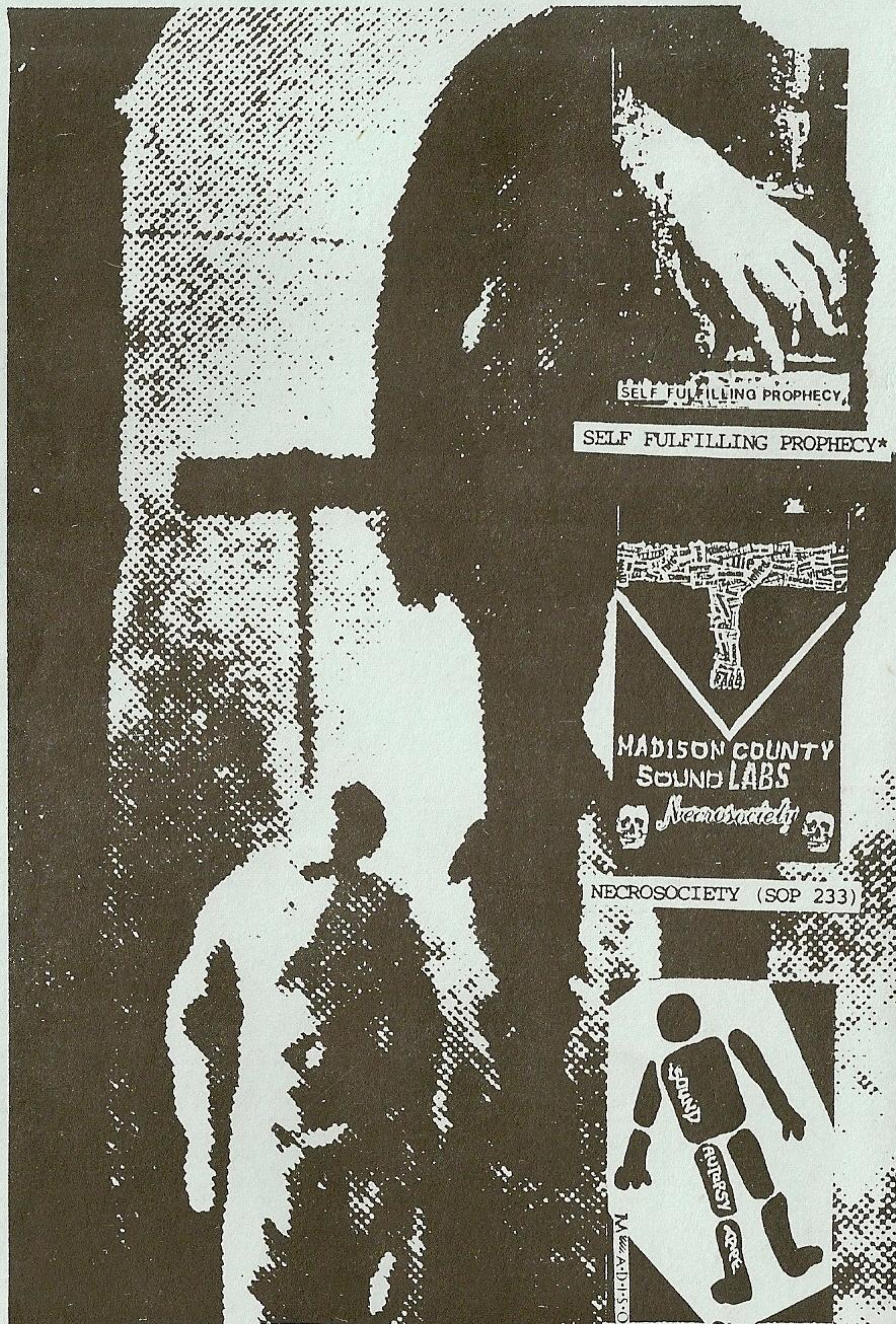
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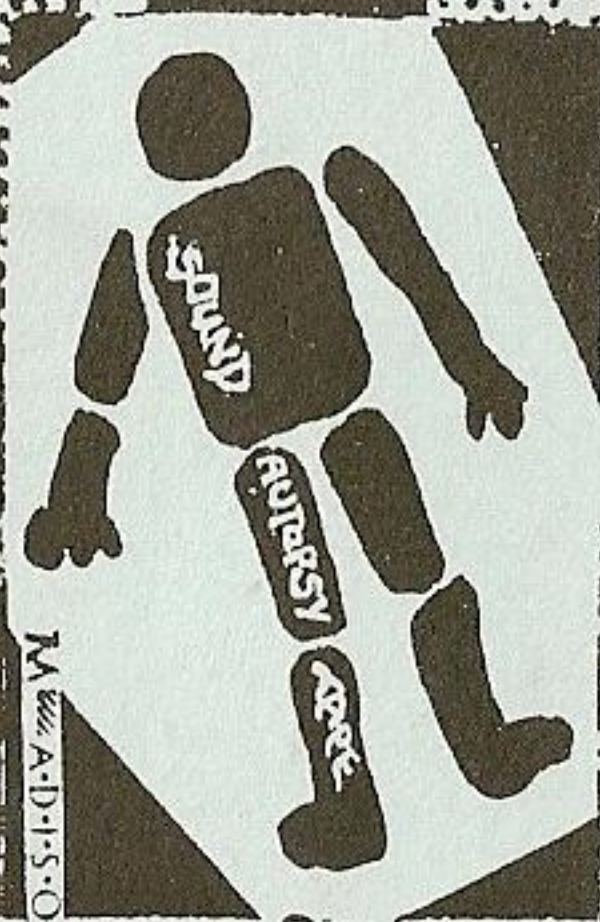
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